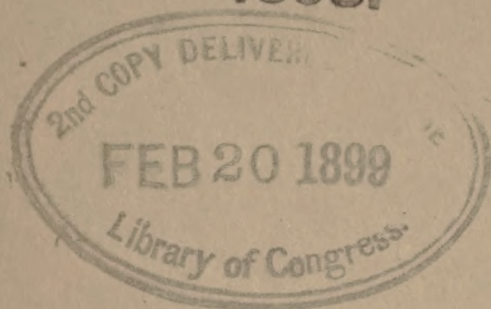




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CHARLIE'S PARTY. Page 128.

KATHIE'S STORIES

By
Miss A. M. Douglas.



ILLUSTRATED
KATHIE'S THREE WISHES.

JOHN ANDREW-SON.
**LEE & SHEPARD
BOSTON.**

KATHIE'S THREE WISHES.

BY

AMANDA M. DOUGLAS,

AUTHOR OF "KATHIE'S AUNT RUTH," "KATHIE'S SUMMER AT CEDARWOOD,"
"KATHIE'S SOLDIERS," "IN THE RANKS," "KATHIE'S HARVEST DAYS,"
"IN TRUST," ETC.

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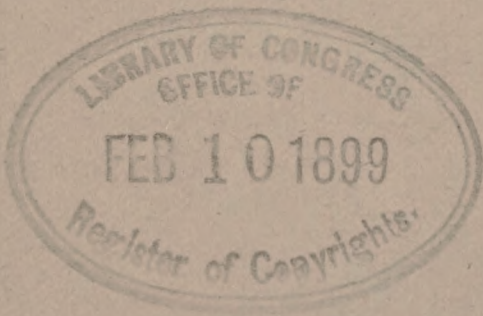
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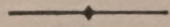
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Kathie Stories



1. KATHIE'S THREE WISHES.
2. KATHIE'S AUNT RUTH.
3. KATHIE'S SUMMER AT CEDARWOOD
4. KATHIE'S SOLDIERS.
5. IN THE RANKS.
6. KATHIE'S HARVEST DAYS.

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KATHIE'S THREE WISHES.

CHAPTER I.

WHAT THE STAR SAID.

“O DEAR!” and Kathie Alston closed her book with a sigh; “if there were only real fairies! If one could wish for a thing and have it!”

Then she glanced around the room. It was altogether unlike an enchanted palace. A faded and well-worn carpet, cane-seat chairs, the chintz cover on the lounge frayed at the edges, two or three old-fashioned pictures, and two plainly dressed women, who should have been fairy princesses instead. And just then it came to Kathie with great force how very hard their lives were,—her mother sewing wearily day after day, to lengthen out their scanty income, and poor pale Aunt Ruth never able to make much exertion in the way of working. If she only had a magic lamp to rub, or a purse in which, open it

as often as she might, she would find a piece of gold, what splendid things she could bring about for her mother and Aunt Ruth, and Rob and Freddy! But she was only a little girl, and could not do anything.

"Kathie," her mother said presently, "you must put away your book and go to the store; and now it is so dark you will not have time to run up to Mrs. Grayson's."

Kathie started. Why, the clock was striking five, and the room was already in a haze of twilight. She had been reading just an hour and a half. Twice her mother had spoken to her about going to Mrs. Grayson's, and she had intended to go after reading a page or so, and thus she had gone on and on instead.

"Can't I do it in the morning, mamma?" she asked, soberly, a little troubled in her conscience.

"No, it would make you late for school, and I promised Mrs. Grayson that the children's aprons should be done to-day. I'll go this evening. Run to the store now, and remember all the things I tell you. Look if you see the boys, and call them in."

Her mother's tired and tender voice touched her, for Kathie had a warm, generous heart.

"O mamma! I wish I was a fairy for your sake.

Then you would n't have to work, and we 'd have a nice house and plenty of money !”

Kathie clasped her arms around her mother's neck and kissed her fondly in a repentant mood.

“There are many kinds of fairies,” Mrs. Alston said. “They don't all live in enchanted palaces.” Then she gave Kathie the basket and some money, and repeated the list of articles she needed.

The little girl trudged along in the cold, thinking of all the marvellous things that might be done if one had the power; and then she wondered what her mother meant by saying there were different kinds of fairies. Of course no one really believed in them, charming as the stories were. Money could do a great many things that seemed almost like magic; but she had no money and never would have. Children could n't earn any, and women rarely became rich. When Rob and Freddy grew to be men — But that was a long way off.

There was a bright little star up in the sky, twinkling with a wise look. It watched her so oddly out of its one golden eye that she could n't help saying, “O you lovely fairy star!” and somehow it seemed as if the fairies were not all dead

But she was at the store before she knew it, went in and made her purchases, and started for home, watching the same beautiful star until she came in sight of the cottage. Then she drew a long breath of dismay. Mamma had put a tin pail in the bottom of the basket for yeast, and told her to leave it at the baker's in going, and stop for it coming back.

"O dear!" sighed Kathie, "I ought to have a fairy named Memory!" and for an instant she felt tempted to cry. Should she go home first, or carry the heavy basket back to the baker's?

"Back to the baker's," said the star,—though I think it was a fairy inside of the little girl, called Conscience.

"It will teach me a lesson, for I *am* heedless"; and she turned around instantly. Then at the baker's she had to take nearly all the things out of the basket, and afterwards she hurried home to make up for lost time.

"How quick you have been!" her mother said, with a smile. Kathie, like other children, was sometimes given to loitering. "Did you see the boys?"

"O, I forgot, mamma; but I neither saw nor heard them. I'll go look for them, though."

Looking for the boys was one of Kathie's hardships. It was n't pleasant to go out in the cold and hunt round for them, and have them grumble at her because they were compelled to come in. But the star up in the blue sky seemed to challenge her to a race, and in a few seconds she reached the hill where the boys were coasting. Rob knew it was n't supper-time, and Freddy, with some big-boy assumption, declared she always had to come and spoil their fun.

"Just stop and try my new sled," exclaimed Charlie Darrell. "See, it's the 'Star,' though it's so dark you can hardly read. All red and gold, and such beautiful letters! It was my Christmas present, and it's splendid! Goes like a flash! Come, Kathie!"

It tempted Kathie as she heard the sleds go whizzing past. But she glanced up to the other star glowing so steadily, and remembered that she had followed her own inclinations all the afternoon. She would obey her mother now; still it was something of a struggle to do just right.

"No," she said, cheerfully, "though I'm much obliged to you, Charlie, and I'd like to try it another time. Mamma is waiting for us. Come, Freddy

Rob, please do. Mamma must go out immediately after supper, and we ought n't to keep her waiting."

Something in Kathie's voice touched Rob, but he turned rather ungraciously.

"What a nuisance girls are!" he said, crossly.

"No, they are n't," Charlie exclaimed, valiantly; "and Kathie's the nicest girl I know. I wish I had such a sister. Only you might have ridden down *once*, Kathie."

As if Rob was afraid she would yield now, he hurried her away. She took Freddy by the hand, clasping the chubby little fingers in her own.

"I mean to tease mother to let me come out again to-night," Rob said presently. "All the boys will be there."

"But you know mamma does n't like you to go out evenings with the boys," Kathie said in a grave, sweet voice.

"It's hard if a fellow has to stay in forever"; and Rob gave a hummock of ice a tremendous kick.

Kathie made no reply just then, but she was revolving something in her mind. Presently she said, with her heart in her throat, "Rob, I wish you'd do something partly for me instead."

“What?” The tone was rather cold and discouraging.

“Mamma will have to go to Mrs. Grayson’s this evening, and I wish you would go with her. It will make the walk seem shorter, and it’s so lonesome to go about in the dark. It’s my fault, for I read my fairy-book this afternoon when I should have gone.”

“Bother! I wish you’d attend to your own business!”

The quick tears rushed to Kathie’s eyes. “I’m very sorry, Rob, but I went to the grocery and brought home a heavy basketful. You know you said you’d always go.”

“Well, why didn’t you call me?” and at this kick the frozen snow flew in a shower.

“Mamma was in a hurry.” After a pause and with a great effort she said, kindly, “Rob, you may have my paint-box on the first rainy day.” Kathie’s teacher had given her a box of paints for Christmas. A day or two after, when it rained, and Rob had to stay in the house, he insisted upon taking forcible possession, he being rather masterly and aggressive.

“They are Kathie’s,” his mother said, “and you have no right to them unless she gives it to you.”

Kathie did n't seem that way inclined. They were so bright and fresh, and the box so clean, that she hated to have them used.

Rob said nothing now, but washed his hands and ate his supper in a quiet manner.

"I'll wash the dishes, mamma," and Kathie began cheerily enough, tucking up her sleeves above her dimpled elbows, "so you can go right away."

Mrs. Alston looked pleased and put on her shawl.

"I am going along, so that no one will run away with you," Rob announced with an assumption of manliness.

"Are you? O, thank you."

Rob felt repaid by his mother's smile and the soft color that stole into her cheeks. How pretty she would be if she was n't so thin and pale!

Then Freddy thought he ought to go, though the warm room and the warm tea had made him look rather sleepy; besides, he was too small a boy to take such a tramp after supper.

"I'll put you to bed and tell you a story," whispered Kathie as the others went away.

Kathie did n't like to wash dishes, but she went at it cheerfully, and it was surprising how soon she seemed

to get through. Then she brushed up the room, drew Aunt Ruth's chair to the table, for she was an almost helpless invalid, and found her sewing-materials. Fred was nodding in the corner by this time, and was rather cross when she roused him, but after she had him tucked snugly in bed he remembered the story. She wrapped a shawl around her, and, sitting on the edge of the bed, commenced in a clear, happy voice ; but while the princess was yet in her enchanted castle, and the prince taken in the toils of some old witch so that he could n't come to her rescue, Fred gave a little crooked snore ; so Kathie pulled the pillow straight, and left him sleeping soundly.

There sat pale, patient Aunt Ruth embroidering. If there only *were* fairies, and one could touch her with a golden wand and make her well !

"Aunt Ruth, is n't it a pity fairy-stories are not true ?" she asked.

"I think some of them are."

"But no one has a wand that can transform other people, or cure them, or give them elegant houses to live in. And there never was a purse like that of Fortunatus."

Aunt Ruth smiled. "I think I have seen Cinder-

ellas," she said, "and giant-killers, and people in enchanted castles who were set free at last, and girls who dropped something better than pearls and diamonds when they spoke."

"But the people in enchanted castles, tell me about them"; and Kathie's eyes were wide open with curiosity. "Where did you see them?"

"Well, I think some brownie or ill-natured fairy put them in a dismal castle, and sometimes they were angry and would n't see the right way to get out. The fairy blinded them, I suppose, for they kicked and thumped against the walls, and sought every way but the right one, and then their eyes were opened suddenly, and they saw how many wrong ways they had been trying."

"O, that's children," said Kathie, with a laugh. "I mean *real* fairies."

"Well, I saw a real fairy awhile ago. A little girl who did several things that she sometimes considers great hardships. She was cheerful and patient, and made everything go along smoothly by some words that were better than diamonds."

"O Aunt Ruth!" Some tender tears came in Kathie's eyes. Then she was quiet for many moments,



KATHIE AND FRED. Page 17.

thinking. She could not transport them all to an elegant palace, nor have servants come at her call, but she remembered the real fairies there were in the world,— Love, to begin with, a spirit who was tender, patient, self-sacrificing, never cross when things went wrong, never indolent when others could be saved any toil or burden.

“ O,” she thought, with a sigh, “ I never can be such a fairy ” ; and she felt very humble. “ But I might try to do a little.” Then she remembered she had heard Rob ask mamma that morning to mend his gray mittens. So she went to the closet-shelf, where she had seen him lay them.

“ What are you looking for ? ” Aunt Ruth said, after a little.

“ Mamma’s balls of yarn. I want to mend Rob’s mittens, if you will show me.”

“ The balls are on a lower shelf, in a basket.”

“ O yes ; I wish I did n’t forget everything, Aunt Ruth.”

“ You must pay more attention, and *think* when you start to do anything.”

She sat down by Aunt Ruth and began to darn. It was rather tedious to do it so neatly, and Kathie

was not very fond of being quiet, so by and by she said, "Aunt Ruth, I'd like to talk about the giant-killers — I think I never saw any — and the giants."

"There are a great many giants in the world. Indolence, Ill-Temper, Envy, Selfishness, and more than I can mention. Some people only thrust them out of sight for a while, but I have met with several good honest Jacks who kept at them until they were killed. Giants like these spring up everywhere. We all have to fight them."

"Do you, Aunt Ruth?" and Kathie looked up wonderingly.

"Do you always feel patient and sweet-tempered, Kathie? Are you always willing to give up your own pleasure for the sake of others?"

"O no"; and Kathie could not forbear smiling at the thought. "But you are so good."

"I have some giants to fight. And I call in the aid of such fairies as will help me."

"O Aunt Ruth, it *is* hard to stay here day after day, and not be able to walk out, nor rich enough to ride, and then have to work all the time. I ought to be your good little fairy, and mamma's. Perhaps I can do something to make it brighter and easier."

"You can do a great deal."

"Aunt Ruth, these mittens are finished. It seemed so much when I first began."

"And it is very neatly done. You're almost a fairy"; and Aunt Ruth kissed her. A warm glow came to her face as she recalled her mother's words. The fairies did n't all live in enchanted palaces.

"O, there they come!" exclaimed Kathie, and, springing up, she put away the mittens.

Rob returned in a state of felicity.

"I had a splendid talk with Dick Grayson," he said, "and he is n't half so proud as the boys make out, although he does go to the Academy. He asked me to come over some evening, and O, Kathie, he has such lots of books, and a little study all by himself, where he reads and tries experiments, and his father is so kind and pleasant. Mrs. Grayson praised me for not letting mamma go out alone, and I wanted to tell her it was your thought, not mine. I'm so glad I went. And, Kathie, I shall not want the paints, at least not for pay."

"You can have them to paint your boat," she rejoined, yielding of her own free will a point that she had refused him several times.

"You're a darling!" exclaimed Rob, boy fashion.

She took a long look at the star before she went to bed. Did it never get tired shining steadily on and on? Did n't it want to go to some other place or do something else,—become a sun or moon, for instance, as any little boy or girl would in its place? God wanted it just to shine, and it did its duty. And he wanted her to be a helpful little girl, or else he would have given her a beautiful house, plenty of money, and nothing to do. There were princesses in the fairy stories who had everything they called for, but the real fairies ran to and fro, did as they were bidden, never complaining of hard work. A little while ago she was wishing to be a fairy, one of the working kind it must be.

So she said her prayers reverently and crept into her little bed, thinking of the many things she wanted to do, and most of all to make life a little easier for dear, sweet mamma. There was no way of getting rich, so they must always toil. Wishing for purses of gold and mines of jewels would n't bring about any result, but being cheerful and industrious might.

"I'll try and be a fairy," she thought as she fell asleep.

CHAPTER II.

FINDING A GIANT.

“MOTHER, did you mend my mittens? These are all in holes now”; and Rob held up his hands.

“I was so busy yesterday, and then going out in the evening —”

“Here they are,” said Kathie; “I did it last night.”

“Tall darning”; and Rob laughed incredulously.

“Aunt Ruth showed me.”

“Why, mother, look; she did it splendidly, — as nice and thick as yours. I hate thin darning; it comes out right away.” Rob gave her a boisterous hug and kiss.

“Mamma, have you seen my basket? I can’t find it anywhere”; and Kathie looked disconsolate.

“Did n’t you put it on the shelf?”

“It is n’t there,” was Kathie’s reply.

“Think what you did do with it then. You came directly home from school, did n’t you?”

“Yes, mamma.”

"Well, I don't see it anywhere; I hope you have not lost it."

Kathie looked sober. "I believe I did leave it at school, mamma," she said, at length. "I ran out to speak to Mary Cox, and then I forgot all about it."

Kathie's eyes met Aunt Ruth's. "There 's one of the giants," she thought. "There 's a battle to fight, just as I did last night, when I went back to the baker's. I'll try to remember. That must be my first work."

Mrs. Alston put Kathie's lunch in a napkin. She hurried to school, and was going straight to her desk, when she saw her basket hung on a high nail. That was a sign that it had been left out of place the preceding evening. Miss Moore would mark her now for having been careless.

Kathie took her seat very soberly. There were giants all around, it seemed; for she felt rather cross with Miss Moore when it was plainly her own fault. How could she forget that she had put it somewhere around, and then not come after it! And she had resolved not to have one bad mark this quarter!

Sophie Dorrance rushed in and deposited her books on her desk.

“O Kathie, they 're beginning a snow-house! Come out; it'll be such fun.”

“No,” said Kathie, quietly; “I cannot just now”

“Why, are you sick?”

“No.”

“Why, then, are you angry with any one?”

“I was very careless; so I'm going to sit here for a punishment, to make me remember another time.”

“Who told you to?”

“No one; I am doing it myself. I forget so easily that I must do something to cure myself.”

“What an odd girl you are! What did you forget?”

“My basket, yesterday; and I left it out of place.”

“O, I would n't mind,” said Sophie. “Come.”

But Kathie would not yield. She was sorely tempted to when she heard the ringing laughs outside. Never were ten minutes so long. Then Miss Moore entered and spoke very pleasantly.

“How industrious you are, Kathie!” she said, with an approving smile; for Kathie had her book open.

Kathie colored a little. Her honesty and love of truth would not admit of her receiving praise when she had done nothing to merit it.

"It was n't that, Miss Moore. I was careless about my basket yesterday, and I thought if I deprived myself of some pleasure I should be more likely to remember it."

Miss Moore sat down beside her. "What made you think of this, Kathie?"

Kathie colored a little. "I was talking to Aunt Ruth last night about fairies and giants, and she said our faults were like giants, and that we must fight them."

"And so you have begun?"

"I wish I could remember better; I forget so easily."

"There is no way but by taking pains. I think you will succeed." Then she gave her another sweet smile, and rang the bell.

At recess she enjoyed the snow-house wonderfully. The boys were making square blocks of snow, pressed together as hard and solid as they could get it. They had quite a number piled up. The girls helped, laughing as merrily as the boys. Recess seemed much shorter than Kathie's moments of penance in the morning.

The snow-house progressed rapidly. All through

the noon intermission the children worked, and then remained a little while after school. But presently Kathie said softly to Rob, "I think we ought to go home now. Mamma does n't like to have us stay very long after school."

"Fudge!" exclaimed Rob. "We don't build snow-houses every day. There's nothing to do at home. I shall go right off and play again."

Kathie wished she was a boy. She could think of ever so much work to do, but boys certainly did have more time to play. They could n't sew, nor put the house in order, nor set the table. Suppose she stayed just this afternoon!

"There's another giant," she said to herself. "And the prince who will come out to kill it is Obedience. Yes, I'll go right away."

"Good by, girls," she called out with a cheerful voice; "I must run home."

"O Kathie, that's real mean not to stay and work on the snow-house," exclaimed one of the girls.

"Mamma needs me at home," she began, bravely, though she longed to stay.

"Nonsense! she can stay just as well as not," Rob exclaimed, a little vexed.

"No, I can't," said Kathie, "but I'm sorry, and I'd like to work on the snow-house."

"We won't let her go in it to-morrow then," said the first speaker, — for children can sometimes be very ungenerous with one another.

Kathie winked away a tear, but was resolute. Rob told her to go off and not make a fool of herself. So Kathie ran as fast as she could to keep from feeling badly, and perhaps repenting.

"Mamma, is n't there something I could do for you?" she said as soon as she had entered the room and hung up her bonnet and shawl.

"I'm glad you came home so soon. Where are the boys?"

Kathie explained that they were staying to work on the snow-house. Then her mother gave her some hemming to do, and Kathie found her thimble and sewed for nearly an hour.

"I wish the boys would come home," Mrs. Alston said at length. "Freddy will be half frozen. Rob ought to know better. And there's kindling-wood to split to-night. I'm glad you have some consideration, Kathie."

The little girl glanced up and met her mother's

fond smile. That was reward enough. She was quite satisfied now that she had missed the play, since she had been useful.

Rob did n't seem to feel very good-natured when he came home, and Freddy was so tired that he fell asleep in his chair before he could pull off his wet boots. His mother roused him, and he began to cry.

"I'm so hungry," he sobbed out at length, his eyes still half closed.

"Freddy," his mother said, "if you stay so late at school another night I shall have to punish you. I have told you a good many times that you must come home earlier, and I shall not speak of it again. Why did n't you come with Kathie?"

"Mamma, I don't think I asked him," Kathie rejoined, quickly. "It is one of the things I forgot again, but I am trying hard to remember."

Her mother kissed her and smiled by way of encouragement, then told her to give Freddy a bowl of bread and milk and put him to bed.

He considered this very hard at first, but Kathie fed him in such a merry fashion that he soon became quite good-natured.

"Tell me another story," he begged, after she had tucked him snugly in bed.

"I can't to-night, Freddy. I must go and set the supper-table."

"Just a teeny little one, — so long," measuring a little space with his fat hands.

"No, dear, I have not time; so good night."

"You're a cross old thing! You never will do anything nice for me!" he returned, crossly.

Kathie thought this very unkind when she had been trying so hard to be patient, then she remembered that Freddy was only a little boy, and very sleepy at that. Sometimes she had fancied mamma and Aunt Ruth cross when they refused her anything, and like a flash she understood how that occasionally compliance might be quite impossible and yet not unkind. It was strange how, when one began to think, one could see so much. So she made no reply, but, smiling softly to herself, shut the door. After the dishes were washed she glanced up with a bright face. "Is there anything else that I can do, mamma?"

"The beans are to be picked over and put in water to soak for to-morrow."

"Baked beans! Won't that be gay and festive!" exclaimed Rob, who was trying to cut a ball-cover from the red lining of an old boot-leg.

Kathie always thought this very "poky" work, but somehow to-night it went very well. Then she looked over the dried cherries, and finally mixed the cakes for breakfast.

Rob, worn out with his arduous labors, dropped asleep upon the lounge, and Kathie quietly picked up his numerous "traps," — for he had a boy's fashion of leaving everything around.

"You have been a kind, helpful little girl," Mrs. Alston said with her good-night kiss. "I am very thankful, for I was not feeling very well."

"Mamma," said Kathie, "must you always work so hard, — you and Aunt Ruth?"

"We are poor, Kathie, and so we cannot afford to indulge in idleness, however pleasant it might be sometimes. But when my children are grown up and can work for me, I hope life will be a little easier."

Kathie sighed. If fairy godmothers only would come at one's wish! Well, she must be a fairy herself.

When Kathie went to school the next morning she was surprised to find a palace sparkling in the sun. It had a grand turret at one corner, which the boys had deluged with water, and from every projection

hung icicles that glittered like diamonds. How very beautiful it was ! Kathie stood in astonishment for a moment, then she entered the arched doorway. There was a table in the centre, and square masses of snow around the sides to represent chairs.

“ Is n't it a beauty ? ” asked Rob, exultantly. “ We worked like Trojans last night, I tell you. That 's the handsomest snow-house that was ever made in this town, I know.”

Rob did not remember the many hundred school-boys there had been before his time, and the snow-houses they had all made.

There were a few finishing touches to be added at recess, and then the children decided to eat their dinner in it. This arrangement was hailed with a shout of delight, and they settled themselves at once.

“ Kathie Alston can't,” said Lottie Thorne. “ She ran off home, and would n't help work.”

Several of the children turned towards Kathie, whose face reddened at this sudden onslaught. For a moment she stood quite still ; then she walked away a few steps without a word.

“ That 's mean of you, Lottie,” exclaimed one of the larger boys. “ Kathie did work awhile.”

"I knew mother needed me," Kathie replied at length in a subdued voice. "It was right to go home."

More than one felt the force of Kathie's remark.

"Well, she can have all the fun, then, without doing the work," said Lottie, rather sulkily. "I don't think I'll help build another snow-house and have my hands half frozen."

At this instant the bell rang, which brought the dissension to an end.

"Kathie," Rob began, giving his elbow a thrust in her side to enforce his words, "I think you were a little fool! I would n't have let Lottie Thorne talk to me in that way; and you stood and never said a word. What made you?"

"I was killing a giant," said Kathie, soberly.

"A giant!" Rob opened his mouth as well as his eyes.

"Yes. I felt real angry at first, because I did n't go from laziness. I'd like to have stayed, but I was glad to think of mamma in time. Aunt Ruth told me that our bad tempers were like giants, and that Jack in the fairy-book was n't the only one who set out to kill them. I want to remember, and I don't want to get angry. That's two."

"Humph!" said Rob, rather disdainfully.

The children took their seats and went to work. The last hour was devoted to arithmetic. Kathie ciphered away industriously. One after another the children read their answers.

Miss Moore called the names of those who were wrong. They would have to stay in and do their sums over. Lottie Thorne's was amongst them.

Kathie passed her in going out and felt real sorry as she caught a glimpse of the disappointed face. She paused half a moment beside her.

Lottie was rather selfish, and was glad to have any one assist her. Kathie did occasionally, but she felt quite awkward about it now. She summoned courage presently, and said, "Can't you find your mistake, Lottie? These long-division sums are real bothering."

"It's too bad! I've been all over it once. Dear! when any one is in a hurry —" And Lottie's blue eyes seemed to indicate a shower.

"Let's look again," said the cheery voice. "Why, here, in the very beginning, you didn't carry, you see."

"And it's all to do over, — this great long sum!"

Lottie's tone was despairing, and she surveyed it in utter dismay.

"That won't get it done," said Kathie, with a bright smile; so at it they went in good earnest.

"That's right," exclaimed Miss Moore, glancing it over.

"Kathie, you are the best girl I know"; and Lottie gave her a fond squeeze. "If any one had been as cross to me as I was to you this morning, I would n't have spoken to her. I'm real sorry."

"Never mind," said Kathie, hunting up her hood. "Only it *was* hard to go home yesterday, but I knew mamma needed me."

So the two girls went out to the snow-house. "It was better to be pleasant," Kathie thought, and she determined to make war upon her giants whenever they dared to show themselves.

The children had a delightful play, only it was so short.

"If we could all come to-morrow," exclaimed Charlie Darrell. "Would n't it be fun to stay the whole afternoon and have a regular good time? Who'll be here?"

"I! I!" shouted a chorus of voices, Rob's loudest amongst them.

Kathie was silent; should she promise or not? Saturday was always such a busy time. But how delightful it would be to come!

"You'll be sure to?" Charlie Darrell said to Kathie, lingering a little behind.

"I can't tell for certain."

"What's the matter? You wouldn't ride on my sled the other night, and you don't want to play very much. What makes you so queer?"

Queer! When she was trying so hard to be good and thoughtful, and from Charlie Darrell too! Kathie's heart was up in her throat.

"Am I very queer?" There was the least little tremble in her voice.

"You've always been so good-natured and full of fun, and now you seem so sober."

"I want to be just as good-natured and pleasanter than ever before."

Charlie looked at her as if he was afraid she had lost her wits, then he said, "Why, Kathie?"

"Because," very slowly and with an effort, "I am trying to be better."

"You always were good enough."

"Not quite"; and Kathie gave a faint smile.

"But do you think it wrong to play?" and Charlie looked alarmed.

"No, indeed, only mamma wants me a good deal of the time, and I am trying to think of her. It's about all I can do to make her happy."

Charlie was grave enough. "You're better than the rest of us, Kathie," he said, with much gentleness. "Only I hope you can come to-morrow."

Kathie hoped so too as much as anybody. "I'll try," she answered, cheerily.

Then she hunted up Freddy, who did n't want to go home a bit, and felt sure he was a big boy and could do as he liked.

"Remember what mamma said," Kathie whispered, and he walked reluctantly by her side, casting longing looks backward.

"Just wait till I'm as large as Rob," he said, half crying. "You won't make me mind then."

"O Freddy, it is n't for me at all," she said in a low, half-disheartened tone. "And I'd be happier if you were a grown-up man."

The child's fancy caught at the idea, and he began to make plans for the coming manhood.

CHAPTER III.

AN ENCHANTED PALACE.

"MAMMA," Kathie said on Saturday morning, "do you think I could go and play with the children this afternoon? They mean to have a great time in the snow-house."

"I shall have to indulge you, I suppose. You have been very industrious for several days."

"But will you need me very much?"

"You can get all your work done this morning, and there is no particular sewing."

That made Kathie exceedingly light-hearted. She was as brisk as a bee, making beds, sweeping, and dusting, while her mother attended to the baking and the extra cooking for Sunday. Rob was very good-natured, and did the errands. The time passed so rapidly that it was noon before Kathie thought.

"What a short morning!"

Aunt Ruth answered her bright smile. "You don't need to look very far for fairies now," she said.

"It's so odd, Aunt Ruth; nothing has bothered me this whole morning. Everything fitted into some little space of time; and it seems to me that on some days, do my best, all goes wrong."

"Is it your best?"

"I don't believe it is, Aunt Ruth"; and Kathie gave a little laugh. "Do you know I've been thinking a good fairy must attend you, and that her name is Patience? It is hard to sit here day after day and sew and knit. Would n't you like to go out?"

"Certainly I should; but, as you said the other night, I can't walk, and there's no one to take me in a carriage."

"When Rob grows up, I hope he will be a rich man."

"And have a generous heart."

"But you played when you were a little girl?"

"Yes, my dear. We had a happy home and many comforts."

Aunt Ruth sighed softly. It had been a hard struggle not to repine. She had striven very earnestly for a meek and quiet spirit.

"I wish you could go out, and the snow is so splendid now. Aunt Ruth, I wonder why rich

people never think of the pleasure they might give poorer ones. If I was rich and had a sleigh —”

Kathie went off into a somewhat lengthy vision. When she roused herself from it, she said, slowly, “Playing fairy is n’t quite so good as the real thing.”

“But rich people have their own business and their own pleasures, and many demands upon them ; they cannot think of everybody,” Aunt Ruth rejoined. “And when we do the best we can, that is all that is required of us. So if you are a fairy in an humble sphere you must do what you can, and be content.”

Kathie thought of the star, shining on and on ; that was it.

After dinner Kathie helped wash the dishes, and then dressed herself. She was a pretty little girl, with golden ringlets and cheeks that brightened with a word. Her eyes were soft and dark, neither blue nor hazel, but like shady lakes ; and they always had such a tender expression that any one would guess at once that she had an affectionate heart. She looked very sweet in her gray cloak and dainty scarlet hood edged with white, that Aunt Ruth had made her for

Christmas. Rob, all impatience, had started on before.

"Freddy must be a good boy and mind sister," was Mrs. Alston's parting command.

They ran off to the school-house eagerly. Quite a number were already assembled and discussing what the play should be. The boys wanted war. The party must be divided into two factions, and the snow-house should be a camp or castle, — it did n't matter which, — and one should try to take it from the other.

"But then you'll have to batter it down," said Harry Cox, "and that would be a shame. Why, we might play in it ever so long."

"O, that's all the fun! Can't we build another?"

Rob, like the hero of old, was for war. The voices rose high and eager.

"But then the girls can't play," exclaimed Charlie Darrell; "snowballing is too hard for them. When the house begins to look old and rusty we can do that."

"Yes," said Kathie, "we would all like to play."

Then a diversion was created by the appearance of Sophie Dorrance, followed by their fat, jolly-looking black woman, who was carrying a huge basket

"O Sophie!" was the general chorus.

"I begged mother to give us something to eat, and Chloe made such lots of cookies! We're going to have real fun. What are you doing?"

"Nothing. We can't make up our minds what to play. The boys wanted war and prisoners."

"Just like boys," said Sophie, with a twinkle in her eye.

"Well, what then?" asked Rob.

"Something nice, where there's a princess and lots of servants. Kathie Alston, let's have a fairy play. You're so capital at that. And we have a snow-palace."

"Fudge!" returned Rob, disdainfully. "Who cares for such things?"

"We ought to play something to please the girls," said Charlie Darrell, in his manly fashion. "We can have a good row and racket by ourselves some time, so let's take the fairy play. A little girl must be stolen from her father's palace and changed into — what, Kathie? — and we'll all go search for her. There must be a good fairy and a wicked fairy."

"First-rate, Charlie"; and Sophie laughed. "Why, you're almost as good as Kathie. There must be

soldiers — and — O yes, boys, you can have your battle — and by and by the princess gets safely home. There must be a prince too, and I'll choose him, — Charlie Darrell !”

“ Hurrah !” shouted half a dozen voices.

“ And the boys must choose the princess.”

For a few moments there was a good deal of merry confusion, and then the voices assumed a definite sound, — “ Kathie Alston !”

“ O no,” said Kathie, in her sweet, timid fashion. “ If I am anything, I think I had better be the fairy godmother. And little Rose Gordon will make such a sweet princess.”

Sure enough. Rose had long golden curls as well as Kathie, but she was wrapped in a snowy hood and cloak so nearly white that she looked almost like a veritable fairy child.

Rob declared noisily for Rose. By degrees the boys fell into the line, but Charlie Darrell was last.

“ I wish it had been you,” he whispered softly to Kathie.

“ But you must be a good prince,” was her low reply.

“ And now what about it ?” began Sophie

"Must n't there be a christening first? And while everybody is feasting this wicked fairy must come and steal the baby. Kathie, fix it all up nice for us."

So Kathie began to plan. The table was to be prepared for a feast, and all the fairies were to bring their gifts. The boys and girls went to work eagerly. They brought in some branches of evergreens and ornamented the wall of the palace as well as the table, and then they found some long icicles out of which they made pyramids for the table. There were to be soldiers and servants and a king,—Tom Utley, being the largest, was chosen for this position. Rose was to be called the Princess Golden, because her hair was so soft and shining. Charlie was to be called Prince Bertram, and the godmother was to be Pearl, and the wicked fairy, Malice. But who would be the wicked fairy? At this there was a general drawback.

"Well," said Sophie, "I think I will. Somebody must, you know, or the play will be spoiled. And I'll try to look as ugly as possible."

All the children laughed, for Sophie was always so good-natured and merry, and had such a round, smiling face.

The play began. One after another the guests came to the frost-palace, bowing low to the king and queen, and then went over to the cradle of evergreens where the Princess Golden was lying, and the little mischief of a Rose had hard work to keep her face sober. They deposited their gifts at her feet, and wished her all manner of good fortune. Then came the fairy Pearl, who touched her with her wand and said that she would be the wisest, loveliest, and best princess that the world had ever known, but that she must never be left alone until she was seven years old, or some very great misfortune would happen to her. Then she kissed the little one and they all went to the feast.

The table looked very pretty indeed with its glittering ice, dark evergreens, and sparkling dishes of snow filled with cake. They had a gay time, you may be sure, and in the midst of the laughing and talking a dark figure crept in, as she could n't fly through the air like a veritable fairy. The children pretended not to see her, and the nurse whose business it was to watch the princess had fallen asleep. So, just as Prince Bertram was asking her hand in marriage, Malice lifted her out of the cradle and took her away.

When the feast was through, Prince Bertram drew off a ring for the princess to wear when she was large enough. The king led the way to the princess's cradle, and behold, it was empty! The poor nurse had tumbled on the floor. They picked her up and shook her soundly, but she was so bewildered that she could tell them nothing. They marched her off to prison, and then they called upon Fairy Pearl to know where the princess was.

She looked through a magic glass, waved her wand, which was a long icicle, three times over the cradle, but all in vain.

"The wicked fairy Malice has stolen her away," she said, presently. "With her arts she has doubtless changed her into some other form. She must be searched for seven years, and when she is found I will restore her to her true shape."

With that Prince Bertram declared he would be one to go and look for her. He took his sword in his hand and marched out as brave as a real knight. The courtiers followed, bowing to the king and queen, who were very sorrowful indeed. Every year they were to come back and report progress.

Their years were not very long, you may be sure.

First, they searched the kingdom of Highwood, which was the great pile of wood for school use. The king of this domain came out to meet them very peaceably, and offered them every courtesy, but no princess did they find. That took them a whole year, and then they returned to the king, who was very much disappointed.

Next they searched the Lake kingdom, their large sliding-pond, around one side of which grew some clumps of alders and willows. The fairy knocked on the ice with her wand, but in vain. Not a sign of any princess did they see. Then they went to the Forest kingdom, which was supposed to be inhabited by malicious elves. Sure enough, just as they reached it a shower of balls greeted them. Prince Bertram, being very courageous, led his men to the fight, and they had a great time. Such whoops and shouts and yells as issued from the trees! you would have thought it a pack of Indians instead of fairies or Christian people. In the midst of the *mélée* they saw the fairy Malice flying with the Princess Golden, but she went so swiftly that they could not overtake her. But then they had some news for the poor king, and he concluded that he would join in the search, instead of staying at home.

Well, they went everywhere, fought battles with elves and brownies and giants, and the seven years were almost ended. They were now in the kingdom of Snow, and this was where some of the boys had thrown a great heap against the fence as they were cleaning out the paths. Fairy Pearl tried some spells with her magic wand, and found that the Princess Golden was surely here. Just back of the fence stood the stump of a great sycamore, and the attendant of the fairy Malice had built her a little hut. Of course she pretended to think no one could ever find her here, but looking out one morning she saw that her place was besieged. So she called up her soldiers and bade them prepare for battle, while she shut the princess in the hollow tree so that she would soon become a part of it, and then she could never return to her father, since, if they did not find her in the seven years, all search would be vain.

Prince Bertram was a good soldier, though. They gained the day as before, and took the fairy Malice and all her servants prisoners. They threatened to chain the evil fairy in a dungeon unless she would confess what she had done with the Princess Golden, but she was obstinate, and would not open her

mouth, so they marched her off. As she had dropped her wand in the fight, she could not free herself from their power, but she looked back to the tree and shook her head mysteriously.

"We'll find her," said Fairy Pearl, exultantly; and with that she went up to the tree and touched it with her long icicle. It did look just as if the Princess Golden came out of the tree, and there was a great shout of triumph. Prince Bertram took her in his arms and carried her home, and they all recounted their adventures. Another feast followed this, at which the cookies were all demolished, and they found that it was beginning to grow dusky in the snow-palace.

"Let's go out and have one good ride down hill," said some one, and they all assented immediately. Charlie Darrell took his princess down once, and then he insisted that Kathie should try.

"It's splendid!" she said, her sweet face all in a glow.

After two or three turns she declared that it was time to go home.

"You always get in a hurry," Rob exclaimed. "You never can let a fellow have his fun in peace!"

This was rather unkind, considering that it was so late ; but when Rob was having a good time he never wanted it to end.

The moon was just coming up, and every little point of snow sparkled as if set with a diamond. The long, sloping hill looked like a glittering bay. It was hard to leave it.

"We had better go," Kathie said again, and this time several others joined her.

"I mean to ride you home on my sled," Charlie Darrell exclaimed. "You're going to be my princess now."

A warm glow stole up in Kathie's cheeks, quite different from the one made by the cold and the rapid exercise.

"I want to ride too," exclaimed Freddy, beginning to whine a little, for he was getting tired and sleepy.

"You can't, Freddy," said Charlie, rather positively.

At this the child cried outright.

"Can't I hold him on my lap?" suggested Kathie, in her most winsome voice.

"O no ; it would tire you half to death and not any pleasure at all. I'll tell you what we will do, Freddy," and he turned to the little one with an air

of animation ; “ we ’ll be the horses to take Fairy Pearl home, and we will make believe that this is an elegant chariot. Your name will be Firefly because you are such a fast horse. Come, Firefly, and let me put your bridle on.”

Freddy laughed till he made dimples in his fat, rosy cheeks, though the tears were still shining in his eyes.

“ Come, Firefly, let ’s start.”

Kathie said good by to the girls and seated herself on Charlie’s sled. Freddy was quite elated with the idea of being of so much importance, and ran with all his might. Charlie would rather have been alone, as he had counted on making his sled fly like a bird, but he was very patient and sweet for Kathie’s sake. It was a nice ride, and when they stopped at the little cottage Kathie expressed her thanks.

“ It ’s a great pleasure to me,” said Charlie ; and his eyes were in a glow of satisfaction ; “ only it is n’t half long enough. If you ’ll try it again some day !”

“ Maybe I will. O,” she said, with a sudden burst of feeling, “ is n’t it just lovely to be well and strong, and to run about and take comfort in everything !”

"Do you know any one who is not?" asked Charlie, in a little amaze.

"Yes,— Aunt Ruth. She has n't been out since cold weather commenced. When it is so slippery she has to stay in the house, because she's lame and weakly. I wish I could make her well and strong."

"What a good little thing you are!" and Charlie looked at the sweet, earnest face.

"I must go in," said Kathie. "Good night."

"Good night, little Firefly"; and Charlie gave Freddy a hug.

The two children stamped the snow off their feet and ran up stairs. The supper-table was already spread.

"Why, mamma, is it so late?" exclaimed Kathie. "We had such a grand time; did n't we, Fred?"

"And a fairy who stole a little baby, only it was Rose Gordon; and we had cakes to eat, and a great throne, and Charlie Darrell was prince, and I was a horse Firefly. Did n't we drag you nice, Kathie?"

Aunt Ruth laughed at the queer jumble.

"It's all true, and Rose was hid in a tree, but I'm awful sleepy and hungry. Can I have some supper right away?"

"Where 's Rob?"

Rob answered the question in person. He bolted through the door, slammed it shut, threw his cap down in one chair and his coat in another, and began tugging at one boot while he balanced himself on the other foot.

"We 've had a splendid time, and I feel as if I could almost eat a bear!"

"Not quite so boisterous, Rob," said his mother, while Aunt Ruth put her hand to her forehead.

"O, I did n't mean to"; and the refractory boot was landed on the opposite side of the hearth with a jerk. "I never *can* be still, mamma."

"I 'm — so — hungry."

Kathie put Fred in his place. Rob drew up Aunt Ruth, chair and all, and in a few moments they were at supper

"How late you stayed!" Mrs. Alston said, presently.

"I guess we did n't think it was so late," returned Kathie.

"I hope you have n't taken cold. Were you out of doors all the time?"

Kathie began to explain what they had been do-

ing, and Rob made frequent interruptions. Aunt Ruth was a good deal interested.

Kathie put Fred to bed, and then brought her little chair beside Aunt Ruth, taking the thin white hand in hers.

“O Aunt Ruth,” she said, “I wish you were a little girl again, and just as well as I am.”

The pale lips pressed a fond kiss on those beside her, so young and warm and sweet.

CHAPTER IV.

THINKING OF OTHERS.

CHARLIE DARRELL drew a hassock close to his sister Jessie, who sat crocheting. He had reached home just in time for supper, and described the afternoon's amusement in glowing terms. But now he felt a little drowsy and a little lazy, and he was very fond of watching Jessie. She was seventeen, three years older than Charlie, and they had a sister still older, who was married.

Charlie loved her dearly. In fact she was a very lovable, sweet-tempered girl, nearly always ready to listen, and to assist him in any way that she could. And in return he was very obliging, and tried to be quiet and well-behaved as well as kind.

He looked round the room now, and could n't help feeling how cheerful and pretty it was. A large open-front stove, where the coals glowed ruddily and shot up feathery dancing spires of scarlet and blue flame. There was a soft rug before it, with the pic-

ture of a hunting-dog plunging through reeds, sedge-grass, and lilies for some ducks in the distance. A great, comfortable-looking house-cat lay upon it, stretching herself and purring out her gratitude. The carpet was bright, some pictures hung around the walls, a bookcase was in one wide recess, and the bay-window was filled with Jessie's flowers. There was a lamp burning on the centre-table, and the porcelain shade was beautifully ornamented with several tiny pictures. It was a charming, cosey room.

And as Charlie enjoyed this in a half-sleepy way another picture came into his mind, — a plain, low-ceiled room, with a rather worn rag-carpet on the floor, very common furniture, and a faded chintz-covered lounge, very few books, no pictures worth mentioning, two tired-looking women always sewing, and dear little Kathie. What a hard life she had!

"Jessie," he said, "I think Kathie Alston is the best and noblest little girl that I ever knew."

"She seems very nice and pleasant. I like her because she always looks so cheerful."

"And she is n't a bit selfish. She would give up anything if some one else wanted it. And she's continually thinking of others, and wishing they were happy."

"The right spirit, I am sure."

"And Rob 's such a — well, he 's rude and thoughtless, and never seems to appreciate what she does. He is good-natured to us boys, and a capital fellow for fun, but I wish Kathie had a nice home —"

"Is n't her home pleasant? Mrs. Alston appears to be a very kind woman."

"O, I like her and Kathie's Aunt Ruth, but it is sad to be poor, and to have to work hard."

"Yes, indeed," Jessie said.

"Kathie 's always thinking of her Aunt Ruth, and wishing she was well. It 's real hard to be sick and lame."

"I have met Miss Conover several times, and I think she bears her burdens very patiently."

"But it 's hard, all the same."

"Yes, Charlie, it is"; and Jessie drooped her thoughtful brown eyes.

There was a pause, and presently Charlie began again: "Jessie, do you think we could do anything to make Miss Conover happier."

"I don't know, Charlie; have you thought of any plan?"

"Only" — Charlie hesitated a little — "if we could take her out to ride."

"Do you think she would go?"

"Why, yes"; and then Charlie repeated the few words that had passed between him and Kathie.

"We might do that. Dolly is so gentle that no one would be afraid with her. Sleigh-riding did you mean?"

"Yes. Would n't it be nice? Kathie would feel so delighted."

"Suppose we go next week, the first nice day? We will take the two-seat sleigh, and invite both Kathie and her aunt."

"Splendid!" said Charlie.

"And I can do it very nicely. Mrs. Thomas asked me the other day whom she could get to do some fine needlework. I'll go and see if Miss Conover can undertake it, and then we will ask them to drive with us."

"Just the thing."

Then he came to kiss Jessie, and went off to bed thankful that he had discovered a way of making some one happy, and, most of all, Kathie.

The next day being Sunday there was no playing

or snow-balling. It was cold but clear, and sunny as a midsummer day. The children were none the worse for their ice-palace party; even Freddy, when he woke up, was as bright as a daisy.

Sunday was always a long day to Rob. He went to church in the morning with his mother and Kathie, and to Sunday school in the afternoon; but it seemed as if he had read every book in the house and heard everything.

"O dear," he said after supper, as Kathie was washing up the dishes, — for on Sunday they had a fire in the parlor, as the room fronted the street, and looking at the people passing made a pleasant break in Aunt Ruth's monotonous days, — "O dear, I don't know what to do with myself!"

"You'll have to fight a giant," Kathie answered, soberly.

"Let's hear about that, Kathie"; and, for a wonder, Rob was quite interested.

"You know I was telling you the other day that Aunt Ruth said our evil tempers and feelings soon grew to be giants if we did n't make war upon them. And that part of fairy-stories is true, for some people do set out to kill giants."

"Which one shall I go at?"

"I think, Rob," — and Kathie hesitated a little, —
"that the Sunday giant is Restlessness."

"I can't help it. I'm a boy, and I can't be still."

"Not if you try *very* hard?" Kathie smiled her sweetest.

"Well—" Rob looked rather undecided. "About the Monday giant then?"

Kathie laughed. "Are you going to have a giant for every day?" she asked.

"I dare say *you* could find a dozen."

"But, Rob, I'm not trying to; I love you dearly."

"Giant number two? Go on."

"One giant is Thoughtlessness. He's troubled me a good deal too."

"Well, number three?"

"You're — pretty — boisterous, sometimes," Kathie said, slowly.

"I can't help that, Kathie, I positively can't. I think everything makes more noise with me than with any other fellow in the world. If I touch a chair, it's sure to fall over; if I go for coal, ever so many pieces drop out; and water always slops over, and I catch my foot in the carpet, and — and — I'm a bother

generally. I wish I was n't. I'd rather be a nice fellow like Charlie Darrell."

That was a great admission for Rob to make. Generally he thought himself as good as anybody.

"But, Rob, dear, one can take pains."

"I *always* forget"; and Rob brought his fist down on the table so vigorously that all the dishes rattled.

"Kathie," said her mother, looking in, "what is the matter?"

"There, that's just it. I seem bound to make a noise anyhow. I was only telling Kathie something."

"Don't tell quite so loud. I thought the dishes were broken."

"Now I'm all done," said Kathie, cheerily. "Rob, I'm pretty bad about remembering, so I made up my mind to fight that giant. Every time that I forget I just stop and do something that is n't so pleasant by way of punishment."

"Like what?" Rob was fond of illustrations.

"Well, the other morning I could n't find my lunch-basket, and when I went to school I saw that Miss Moore had hung it up amongst the mislaid articles. I felt pretty badly, for I did n't mean to

get one discredit this quarter ; but I thought that was n't quite enough, so I made myself stay in while the others were having a good time. It was real hard. And since, when I've left some things undone, or forgotten what mamma told me, I go and do whatever is the greatest hardship."

Rob whistled thoughtfully. It was n't exactly a Sunday tune, to be sure ; but he was doing some pretty good thinking.

"Kathie," he said presently, "everybody likes you so. Charlie Darrell wishes you were his sister."

"I'm not going to be anybody's sister but yours, dear old Rob"; and Kathie gave the curly, chestnut-colored head a fond squeeze, and then kissed the warm, rosy lips.

Rob winked away some tears. "Is it easy to be good, Kathie?"

"Not — very ; but I guess the more you do of it the easier it comes. And then it makes others so much happier."

Rob put his feet on the stove-hearth and his elbows on his knees, and was lost in a brown study. "I think I'll look after some of the giants," he said, lighting his lamp to go to bed.

CHAPTER V.

A PLEASANT SURPRISE.

ON Monday afternoon Kathie hurried home from school to help her mother finish some sewing. She had hardly seated herself and found her thimble and scissors, when there was a jingle of bells before the door. She sprang up and ran to the window.

“O mamma, it’s Charlie and Miss Jessie Darrell! and Miss Jessie’s coming in. O mamma, if we only had a fire in our parlor!”

“Never mind about that, my dear; go to the door at once.”

Kathie obeyed, thinking that there did n’t a great many people live in their kitchens altogether.

Miss Jessie was smiling and social. She wished Kathie good afternoon, and asked if she could see her aunt, Miss Conover.

So there was no other course but to invite her into the kitchen. She wore a beautiful gray empresse-cloth that looked like heavy silk, trimmed with

scarlet velvet ; her cloak was lovely pearl-colored material, with tiny blue and scarlet dots ; and Kathie knew that she had an elegant velvet one beside. Her white French felt hat was trimmed with bands of scarlet velvet and a dainty scarlet plume. She looked so very pretty that she almost shamed the plain, faded room.

And yet she never appeared to notice it at all. She sat down in the rush-bottomed chair and made herself quite at home, inquiring very cordially how both ladies were, and talking of the fine weather and the delightful sleigh-riding. Then she asked Miss Conover about the embroidering.

"Mrs. Thomas will have quite a good deal," she said, "and she is willing to pay liberally to some one who will do it neatly ; and so I thought I'd see you about it."

Miss Jessie's sweet voice and gracious manner made this seem a real compliment. Aunt Ruth colored with a flush of gratified feeling.

"I could undertake it after a week or two," she answered. Then she asked Kathie to get some pieces of needlework from a drawer in the front room.

"These are very handsomely done," Miss Jessie

said ; "I know Mrs. Thomas will be pleased to have hers in such neat hands. I'll tell her to-morrow."

Aunt Ruth thanked her for the kind interest.

"Are you as well as you were in the summer?" Miss Jessie asked next.

"Not quite," said Aunt Ruth ; "I can't have as much air and exercise. In this slippery weather I don't dare to go out at all."

"It would be a great deprivation to me, and I dare say it is to you. And, now that it happens to be so very convenient, suppose you and Kathie should take a little ride with us? We were just going out for pleasure."

"Oh!" exclaimed Kathie, her eyes as bright as stars. Aunt Ruth looked rather doubtful.

"Please don't disappoint me. Charlie will be delighted to have a sleigh full, and our horse is very gentle. It is n't bitterly cold either, and, now that the weather is beginning to moderate, the sleighing may soon come to an end."

Jessie's face was so sweet and entreating that Aunt Ruth found it very hard to resist.

"I'm quite a trouble," she answered, "and Rob is n't here to help."

"But I could," exclaimed Kathie, eagerly. "O Aunt Ruth, please do go. I've been wishing something nice would happen to you, and this is splendid."

"I heard of your being a fairy godmother the other day, so I suppose you have only to desire anything and it comes to pass. I think I must have happened in in answer to your wish."

Miss Jessie smiled in such a lovely fashion that Kathie's heart was won.

"I'd like to be able to wish nice things for everybody, and have them come to pass," she said.

"You'll have to get your wand and touch Aunt Ruth, so that she can be transported to the sleigh."

"This wand," said Kathie; and her arms were around Aunt Ruth's neck, while the eager lips kissed a reluctant assent.

"I'm afraid Miss Jessie will think us a good deal of trouble."

"O no, indeed. Kathie, will you run and tell Charlie to tie the horse and come in a moment?"

Kathie was off like a flash.

"I thought you were n't ever coming," Charlie exclaimed, for he had begun to grow impatient. "But

I 'm so glad. Now, Dolly, we 'll be off in a trice."

Mrs. Alston bundled her sister up nice and warm, and Charlie helped her into the sleigh with the air of a gentleman. Jessie took a seat behind her, saying, "We 'll put Kathie in front to keep off the wind"; at which Charlie laughed.

There was Kathie in her scarlet and white hood, looking pretty enough for any fairy in the land. Charlie tucked her in with a soft blanket and drew up the wolf-skin.

"I suppose Charlie drives a good deal," Aunt Ruth said. The first dash rather started her.

"O yes. Papa trusts him with all our horses except one. We have a very fiery fast horse that is rather beyond Charlie."

"You won't mind if we go fast; will you, Aunt Ruth?" Kathie asked, after she and Charlie had been indulging in a whispered consultation.

"No"; and Aunt Ruth smiled. She was beginning to feel quite courageous.

Dolly pricked up her ears, shook her glossy mane, and started off, skimming over the snow like a bird. The roads were in a very fine condition, and the air

keen and bracing without the sting of the coldest days. A faint pink came to Aunt Ruth's cheeks. Her memory went back to the time when she had been as young as Miss Jessie, and enjoying a happy, care-free life. Brave Brother Robert had been her escort in those days, — dear Rob sleeping somewhere under an Indian sky, the fortune lost, and generous-hearted Fred Alston dead. What changes there had been since Rob left them, ten years before !

Kathie was wild with delight. For children the present is all sufficient, and to see Dolly flying along, her slender legs looking like a mere thread, and hear Charlie Darrell's pleasant voice, was enjoyment enough. The warm blood seemed to race from pulse to pulse, her heart beat rapidly with her great joy, and the fresh wind made her rosy cheeks rosier than ever. Down the south went the sun, and presently dropped out of sight. They were homeward bound. Miss Jessie took good care that Aunt Ruth should be comfortable.

"Has n't it been splendid !" ejaculated Kathie, in a breathless fashion. "O Miss Jessie, I 'm so thankful !"

"And I am very glad to have given you so much pleasure. Some time we will try it again."

Charlie thought that he would like to have Kathie know how much of the plan was his, but he did n't see any good way of telling it.

So they were both helped out, and Rob was there to receive them. He had half a mind to drive back with Charlie, but on the whole he concluded it was best to resist the temptation, as his mother was preparing supper.

Kathie was in the gayest spirits, praising the ride, the horse, and most of all Miss Jessie.

"I say," put in Fred, rather aggrieved, "it's real mean that you did n't take me. I could have crowded down in the blankets."

"But you were n't here, Fred."

"Well, you might have waited a teeny little while. I did come home real soon."

"Hush, Fred," said his mother. "Kathie had nothing to do with it except to go when she was asked."

Aunt Ruth was quite tired, and after supper lay on the lounge. Kathie caught sight of the unfinished work, and her tender conscience smote her.

"Mamma," she began, "I meant to help you sew this afternoon, and I ran off and forgot all about it."

"I did n't expect you to stay at home ; indeed, I should not have allowed you to."

"But the forgetting, mamma, and when I am trying so hard to remember !" Kathie's eyes filled with tears.

"Never mind, my dear ; I don't know as any one ever becomes so perfect as always to think of everything."

"But I 'll sew now."

"No, Kathie, it is n't worth while. After being out in the wind for so long you 'll soon find yourself getting sleepy. I 'll take the kind will for the deed."

After putting Fred to bed, Kathie drew a stool up to the lounge and talked to Aunt Ruth. Some way the conversation turned upon the lost Uncle Robert.

Kathie had heard the story many times before, but to-night it seemed to interest her specially.

"Don't you believe he ever will come back ?" Kathie asked, earnestly. "Would n't it be nice if some day he took us all by surprise, and came home rich as Mr. Darrell ?"

Aunt Ruth sighed. "That will never be, dear. Robert was n't the man to forget his sisters so many years."

“But you never heard that he was dead?”

“True, only we know if he had been living he would have written.”

Kathie wanted to be a fairy more than ever, and bring Uncle Robert back in some queer way that would astonish them all. And then she wondered if he was like Brother Rob or Charlie Darrell. What a dear, lovely afternoon it had been! How delightful it was to be well and have pleasant things happen to you, and — There was a rosy mist before Kathie's eyes and a weight settling upon her brain. Over came the little head on Aunt Ruth's arm.

“I *am* sleepy, sure enough,” said Kathie, with a little laugh. “I guess I'll go to bed. Good night, mamma; good night, dear Aunt Ruthie. Let's all pray that God will send Uncle Robert back.”

How many vain prayers had passed Aunt Ruth's lips! Yet Kathie's sweet, cheery voice seemed to stir hope again.

“What a comfort the child is!” she said to Mrs. Alston. “For her sake I wish we were more prosperous. I sometimes wonder how you will get them all educated.”

“We must trust in God,” Mrs. Alston replied.

“And not worry about the bridge until we have to cross it. But poor Rob ! I wonder if he found any friends at the last.”

“Let us hope that he did,” was the tremulous reply.

At times life seemed a hard burden indeed to Mrs. Alston. Her husband had died after a short illness, just as he was beginning to prosper, and when Freddy was but a month old. To this shock succeeded a long and severe illness, and when she was able to resume her place once more, it was but to hear of fresh misfortunes. The income that had been left to Ruth and herself from her father's property was swept away by a financial reversion, and they found themselves nearly penniless. Mr. Alston's partner offered them, in lieu of money, a house in a pretty country town, which he represented as likely to increase in value, and eloquently set forth the advantages of having a home ; and just then, feeling that it made no difference to her where she went, she accepted his proposal. In the mean while Ruth had a severe and dangerous fall, which was likely to leave her a cripple for life. Discouraged to the uttermost, it was with a heavy heart that Mrs. Alston removed to Brookside. Here a fresh

disappointment awaited her. The house was old and out of repair, and she was indeed a stranger in a strange land. If she could have sold again, she would have returned immediately to the city, where she had some friends ; but that was quite impossible. She had parted with her most valuable furniture, so with the remnants she tried to give the place a homelike look. Ruth recovered slowly, and Mrs. Alston soon found that her small income would not support them all. She could think of nothing but sewing, and she managed to earn considerable by this, while Ruth did embroidering and various kinds of needlework. They did not want for any of the necessities of life, but they had not many of its luxuries.

Since their arrival in Brookside they had not heard from their brother, who had gone to China some three years before. He had rambled about considerably, their last news of him being dated at Bombay, and Mrs. Alston knew at once that he had missed a letter from Ruth detailing their misfortunes. Several times afterward they sent letters to him, but no answers ever came. And now little Freddy was eight years old, — eight years of sorrow, care, and trouble.

This was not all. There was a future to be con-

sidered. Rob was nearly fourteen, a smart, bright fellow, but rough, impatient, and thoughtless. In another year it would be necessary for him to go at some kind of business, and in this little town there was nothing scarcely to do. Must she send him away from home, or would another removal have to take place? Often did she ponder these things, never reaching any definite conclusion. O for some trusty friend to advise and comfort! She had been out of the world so long that she scarcely knew how to take an important step.

She thanked God in her prayers that night for womanly little Kathie, the comfort of her weariest hours, and she tried to trust for the dark future that she could not see.

But Kathie, young and bright and cheerful, was not troubled with anxious forebodings. Only she could not help thinking that it would be very pleasant and comfortable to have a pretty house and plenty of money. If mamma could dress up and be a lady, for she was as pretty as anybody, and if Freddy could have a play-house full of toys, and Rob all the boats, dogs, turning-poles, and various other things that he wanted, how happy they would all be!

But these items could not be had without money, and there was no way to get it until Rob grew to be a man.

Rob was wild to be a sailor. He passed by Kathie's fairy-books with a disdainful smile, and turned his attention to wonderful adventures or sea voyages. Sometimes being an Indian hunter quite divided his regard, but he generally came back to his first love. How much these desires pained his mother's heart he never knew.

A few days after the ride Mrs. Thomas called with her embroidery. She was a young and pretty woman, quite chatty and agreeable. Aunt Ruth's needlework delighted her. She mentioned the price she had been used to paying, "but it was n't done as handsomely as yours," she said, "and yours is worth more. It will be quite a treat to have such beautiful work."

"I heard that you did plain sewing, Mrs. Alston," she went on, "and I have a great pile of sheets and pillow-cases to make up. Having a little baby, I can't find time for much myself, so if you are not very busy, I think I'll send them over to you."

Mrs. Alston expressed her readiness to take them.

"Quite a bright rift in the clouds," said Aunt Ruth

when they were alone. "Kathie, I do believe that we shall be able to have a new parlor carpet in the spring."

"I'll do all I can to help," was Kathie's delighted rejoinder.

CHAPTER VI.

ROB'S GIANTS.

ONE day Rob came home with what he declared to be a splitting headache. His face was flushed, his temples throbbing, and there was n't a spot in his whole body but what pained.

"You must have taken a dreadful cold," his mother said. "I hope you are not going to be sick."

"Just let me lie down on the lounge and be quiet," was all he could say.

She bathed his feet and put on mustard draughts, gave him some hot tea, and tied a napkin round his head wet with vinegar and water. So there he lay turning and tumbling about and wishing he could sleep.

Poor Rob! By morning his fever was higher, and Kathie was sent for the doctor.

"A touch of bilious fever," said Dr. Page. "He is a good deal out of order and has taken a severe cold."

“ But do you think it will prove dangerous ? ”

“ O no. He will be about again in a fortnight.”

So Mrs. Alston had Rob's bed brought down to the parlor and a fire made there. Aunt Ruth watched him during the day, and his mother took care of him at night.

Kathie had a double share of work, — all the errands to do, coal to bring in, kindling-wood to split, and to amuse Fred, who hung after her continually, as there was no wonderful Rob to follow about.

For a week Rob was pretty sick. He didn't take much notice of any one, but tossed about restlessly, and wondered if he never should be cool again ; but after a while he grew more tranquil, and began to think of something to eat. His mother toasted him a piece of bread.

He chewed with very long teeth, as people say. After two or three mouthfuls he said, slowly, “ Mother, is n't this bread a little bitter ? ”

“ No,” she answered ; “ it is because you are still feverish.”

“ I 'd like a drink of cold tea, I believe.”

But that did n't quite come up to the mark either.

“ I wonder if soup would n't be better ? ”

"Perhaps so. When the butcher comes I'll get a piece of meat and make you some nice broth."

Rob thought of the broth for the next three hours. It had such an appetizing fragrance that he was sure it would taste good. Alas for his hopes!

"Did you put in any salt?" he asked, languidly, after he had taken a few spoonfuls.

"Yes, it is very well seasoned," replied his mother. It was n't quite right, however.

"I wish you'd put in some more," he said presently. Mrs. Alston obeyed his behest.

"And some more pepper."

"Pepper is n't very good, Rob."

"But a little would n't hurt me."

Rob was so weak that he felt babyish, and when his mother saw the slow tears coming in his eyes she yielded against her better judgment.

He managed to swallow a little, then he turned to his pillow again.

"Mother," he said, just as she was settled at her sewing, "is n't there some currant jelly?"

"Yes, Rob."

"Could n't I have a taste? You know I like bread and currant jelly so much."

His mother rose and went to the closet where she kept her preserves, uncovered the jar, and took out some.

"I'll just bring you the bread," she exclaimed, "and you can put it on or eat it alone."

She arranged a little tray on the bed and left Rob to help himself.

Though bread and jelly might be royal for a hungry boy, it held no potent charm for him now. Then he tried it alone. That tasted quite good; but now he was taken with a fit of thirst.

"O mother," he began, "don't you know what nice drinks you used to make out of currant jelly and water? Won't you fix me some?"

Mrs. Alston had sewed about an inch. She waited upon her son again.

"That's real good, the best thing I've had yet!"

His smile, faint though it was, rewarded her. He sipped in a pleased fashion, declaring that it looked like wine.

"Mother," about ten minutes after, "don't you think I could sit up a little while?"

"Why, yes, if you feel like it."

"I believe I do."

She drew up the large rocking-chair, put a blanket over it and a pillow at the back. Then she helped Rob to get up, put him comfortably in and covered him nicely.

"That's splendid! I feel as if my bones were 'most worn through. I've been pretty sick; have n't I, mother?"

"Quite sick, Rob."

"Any of the boys been to see me?"

"O yes, — Charlie Darrell, Harry Cox, and several of the others, and Dick Grayson too; but you were a little delirious most of the time, so you could n't talk to them."

"Was I? What did I say?" Rob thought that quite an exploit.

"You built snow-houses, went sledding, played ball and marbles, and scolded Freddy."

"Did I?" Rob smiled a little at that. "But, mother, you don't know what a bother Fred is. He thinks he must do just as the big boys do, and sometimes I can't stir without his being in my way. Seems to me little children ought always to play with girls."

"Because girls have more patience, Rob?"

A faint tinge of color came to Rob's cheek. "Well, not exactly that, mother, but boys are always running or doing something hard, and little ones get hurt."

"All children are a good deal of care and trouble."

Rob felt quite sure that he was n't very much, but he began to grow tired of talking and could n't argue the point.

"I wish you'd get my Robinson Crusoe, mother," he said a few minutes after.

There was a book-rack in the parlor, and each of the children had a shelf. His mother dropped her sewing and looked the books over.

"It is n't here, Rob," she said.

"O yes, it must be, mother. I always put it there," he exclaimed, confidently.

"But it certainly is not here now."

"O, I know; I had it up stairs. It's on one of my shelves."

"I think it is n't best for you to read," was his mother's rejoinder.

"I don't want to read, I only want to look at the pictures. It's so tiresome to sit here and do nothing." The ready tears came again to Rob's eyes.

"And you 're quite sure it is up stairs?"

"O yes. I remember taking it one night when I went to bed. It had been lent to Jamie Hall."

So Mrs. Alston trudged up to Rob's room. No Robinson Crusoe on the shelves or in the closet. Then she searched his box of odd traps with no better success.

"How long she stays!" he exclaimed, impatiently.

"I think you keep her pretty busy, Rob," said Aunt Ruth. "I don't believe she has been quiet more than fifteen minutes at one time to-day."

"Why, I have n't asked her to do more than two or three things for me, and I'm sure I'd a great deal rather be well and help myself," replied Rob, in an injured tone.

It would only fret him to argue the point, so Aunt Ruth kept the peace.

Mrs. Alston returned in a little shiver. She had not expected to be detained so long, and had thrown nothing around her shoulders. Her face looked quite cold and blue.

"I could n't find it anywhere, Rob," she said, going to the fire to warm her hands.

"Did you look in my little box?"

"Yes, and in the closet. It is n't in the room."

"But, mother, I am quite sure Jamie brought it home. He put a blue paper cover on it, you know."

"I believe I remember the circumstance, but you must have lent it again."

"No, mother, I 'm sure I have n't."

"I do not think it is in the house."

"But it must be," said Rob, growing flushed and positive. "It was my Christmas gift! O dear! if it 's lost, — and so many splendid pictures in it too! I never saw a Robinson Crusoe I liked half as well."

"Maybe it will come to light some time. It cannot be lost unless you have mislaid it."

"But I 'm sure I took care of it the last time I had it."

Kathie entered just then, bright and rosy. "O, Rob, actually sitting up!" she exclaimed, gayly. "Dear Rob! Do you feel a good deal better? But O, how white you look!"

"O, Rob 's out of bed!" put in Freddy, loudly. "Rob, are you all well? Can't you go out to play to-morrow?"

"O Freddy, your voice goes through my head like

a trumpet. Mother, can't you put me back to bed again? I'm getting tired."

Mother had just sat down and taken up her needle. She rose and obeyed her son's request.

"The bed feels so good," he exclaimed. "Freddy, do keep still!"

"Get yourself good and warm, and you may go out to play a little while," his mother said, gently.

"O Kathie," began Rob again, "have n't you lent my Robinson Crusoe to somebody? Mother can't find it anywhere. I would n't have it lost for anything."

"No, Rob, I have n't had it. Let me see, — Jamie Hall brought it home?"

"Yes, I'm sure. It's gone, and some one has taken it away. It's real mean!" and poor Rob was getting excited.

Kathie thought a moment or two. "O Rob, I believe I know. The day you were taken sick you had it at school, drawing a picture out of it."

Rob looked perfectly amazed. It came over him like a flash. He had n't quite finished the man Friday, so he put the book in the corner of his desk. He could see it all like a picture.

"Don't you remember?" and Kathie glanced at him. Something in her bright eyes said "Giants"; and Rob was filled with confusion.

"Yes," he rejoined, faintly, and then he lay very still.

"Kathie," her mother said, "I wish you 'd sew a little. I'm quite behindhand."

A tear dropped from Rob's eyes to the pillow. How much trouble and interruption he had caused his mother! That about the book was altogether his own fault. How could he have been so careless as to forget! He had worried himself too, for his head was beginning to ache, and little pains kept crawling down his back. And he could n't help thinking that he ought to fight giants as well as Kathie.

"I must try to remember," he said to himself. There was quite a wet spot on the pillow; and presently he turned his face over to the wall, and, being completely tired out, fell asleep.

He little guessed how much pains they all took to keep quiet. Freddy didn't think it much fun to play alone, and soon came in, and Aunt Ruth read him a story to keep him still. Kathie sewed industriously until twilight, and then went out to do a few errands. Fred desired to go, of course. At first

Kathie wanted to object; but then she thought it wouldn't be much worse for her to be bothered with him than Aunt Ruth and mamma.

But he proved a great plague, all because she was in a hurry, it seemed. He would stop and slide; then he fell down, and she had to halt and pick him up and comfort him.

"O, I've hurt my hand!" he cried. "Look at it, Kathie; is n't it bleeding?"

"It's so dark I can't see. No, I guess not. Put on your mitten again."

"It hurts so, it hurts so! O dear!"

"If you had n't run back to slide, you see, it wouldn't have happened; and sister's in a hurry too. Where's your mitten?"

"I laid it down there when I hurt my hand. O dear! I wish I had n't come. Kathie, what made you bring me?"

"I'm sure I did n't want to, for you're a great bother. Let's go back and find the mitten, if we can, — your nice new ones that Aunt Ruth just knit! and she would be very sorry if you lost one."

"I'll sit here and cry while you go, Kathie. I'm so cold, I'm 'most frozen."

Kathie was out of patience, and wanted to give him a good shaking and a good scolding ; but she thought of the giant just in time. She felt around the spot where Freddy had fallen, and soon found the lost article.

"Now, Fred, if you've had a good cry, we'll run home, and I'll tell you a story about a little boy"; and Kathie made quite a ludicrous affair out of his accident.

"O, that's me," he said, laughing. "I was a great baby. My hand don't hurt any now, and I guess it's all well."

When Rob opened his eyes the lamp was burning, and he heard a subdued stir as of supper-dishes. He felt quite hungry, and thought of his broth, and was just going to call, when a little reflection made him pause.

"I'll wait till mother's through," he decided, which was quite a great effort for him.

"Kathie, go see if Rob is still asleep," his mother said presently.

"No, I'm awake, and hungry as a bear. Can I have some broth?"

His mother had it on the stove, keeping warm.

She poured it into another bowl and brought it to him.

He took two or three spoonfuls ravenously and then stopped. "Mother, this is as salt as brine; just taste of it."

She smiled. "You would have it made salt, you know, but I have some other, only you must wait until it gets warm."

"I 'll wait," he said, very pleasantly, though it seemed to him he would have to eat up the sheet and pillows, he was so nearly starved.

"Mother," he said, when she returned, "sick people are very queer; are n't they?"

"Yes, Rob"; and she drew a long breath.

"I 've made you a good deal of trouble this afternoon," he went on, penitently. "I 'm sorry, only I did feel so sure about the book. I don't see how I came to forget."

"Very easily on that day, Rob. You were not well, and then being so sick immediately after, it was not at all strange. That is n't near so bad as being positive when you are well and ought to remember."

It was a great excuse of his to say that he forgot.

More than once the picture of Kathie fighting her giant had entered his mind. He was older, and ought to do as much, surely.

“When I get well I ’ll try and be more careful,” he said, in a low tone. “You ’re so good and patient, mother!”

She bent over to kiss him, and he clasped his arms tightly around her neck.

“O mother, if you were dead, what would become of me! It ’s so nice to have you”; and Rob sobbed softly. “When I ’m a man you shall not work at all I ’ll have a nice house and a servant to wait on you.”

“If I have a good boy, and a good, honorable, useful man, I shall be satisfied.”

Rob lay still for a long while and thought. Without meaning to be, he was a great, boisterous, selfish fellow, not half as useful as Kathie. Of course she was a girl, and — but Rob’s conscience told him that it was rather cowardly to expect girls to do all the work, and practise all the virtues, simply because they were girls. If he *could* get well, Kathie should n’t run of all the errands while he was off having fun. He meant to make her a black

ring, and lend her his drawing-pencils whenever she wanted them. And he would n't laugh at her, nor be rough, nor — And in the midst of his resolves Rob fell asleep.

CHAPTER VII.

FREDDY'S TROUBLES.

THE next morning it rained. It was Saturday, too, and Freddy had to stay in the house. Rob felt much improved, and thought he would like to get up and have his breakfast.

"And while you're eating it I'll sweep the parlor," said Kathie, "if you don't mind being taken out in the kitchen."

"O no, I shall like it; I am about tired of this room."

Kathie brought out a little stand and put a fresh white towel over it; then she begged her mother to let Rob have a china cup and plate. Mrs. Alston had kept a set of odd, antique china that had been her mother's, and Kathie thought them marvels of beauty and daintiness.

She washed Rob's face and brushed his hair. Her little fingers were so soft and gentle that he felt like kissing them. And there was his break-

fast looking, as tempting as if it had been set for a prince.

"I did n't have any toast nor any jelly," said Fred, surveying it with longing eyes.

"But you're not sick," was Kathie's answer.

"O, I wish I was; sick people always have such nice things."

"And they also have headaches and pains, and take dreadful medicine. That part of it is n't very nice, Freddy," Rob rejoined.

"Did your head ache?"

"Yes, indeed."

"Well, I'd like to have a headache," Freddy said, reflectively; "then I could smell out of Aunt Ruth's nice little bottle."

Rob laughed.

"Don't lean on Rob's table," said Aunt Ruth; "you'll tip it over."

"And that would be table-tippings," suggested Rob, with a smile.

"Do you want all the toast?"

Freddy had edged round to Rob's vicinity.

"Run away," said his mother; "you must n't stand here teasing Rob."

Aunt Ruth poured the tea. Breakfast tasted excellently to Rob. Beside the jelly, he had a little piece of meat broiled, and altogether he was making quite a meal. Indeed, he thought he would have felt well but for a curious lightness in his head and a weakness in his limbs.

Freddy was balancing himself on one leg of the bench. By and by there was a crash; over went Freddy and the bench. Rob was weak and nervous, and gave a jump.

"O Freddy," said his mother, "you have been told not to do that!"

"O dear! O dear! my head is split open! No, it's got a great bump. O dear!"

"It served you just right, Freddy, for disobeying mamma. Now, stop crying; it makes too much noise for Rob."

"O dear! if he had his head hurt—"

"Hush, or I shall send you up stairs in the cold."

Freddy cried to himself a little while, but that was n't much fun. Presently he looked up at the table. "There, you've eaten all the toast!" he exclaimed, ruefully.

"And not had enough. Mamma must toast me some more, and if you 'll sit still five minutes you shall have a piece."

Fred mounted a chair, feet and all. He wore a pair of old shoes because they were so much less noisy than his boots; and now he espied the string dangling from one, and thought he would take a quiet play at horse while he was waiting. So he trotted the one foot up and down, holding the strings as reins; and though he did want to sing out, "Two forty on the plank-road," by a great effort he managed to say it softly, though it was n't half as good. The pony came home, and he tied him up in the stable. This process was fastening the strings to the chair-back.

"Is n't it five minutes?" he asked, looking round.

"Not quite; but you 've been a tolerably good boy, so here 's some toast and jelly."

Fred gave a bound of delight. Alas! down he came sprawling on the floor, with the chair over him. Pony, at this juncture, broke the rein, and freed himself by a vigorous kick.

"O Fred! what is the matter?" and his mother picked him up. He cried pretty hard at first; but,

finding that he was not much hurt, began to vary the exercises by talking at the same time. A queer jumble he made of his horse in the stable and the toast; and it was some time before matters could be explained satisfactorily.

Rob laughed till the tears came in his eyes, the affair seemed so comical to him.

"Keeping a fast horse is rather dangerous, Fred; and trying to keep you still is almost impossible."

"But I was still. I never spoke a word but softly, and I did n't make a bit of noise."

"And came down with a crash at last. Since you did n't break your neck nor the chair, we'll try to stop your mouth with the toast, and be thankful; only next time you fall I think you'll split *my* head open."

Fred looked as if he was considering how it could be done. His mother tied his shoe, wiped the tears from his face, and gave him strict injunctions about his future behavior. Then he was allowed to have the toast and jelly.

"Now," said Aunt Ruth, "suppose you get your picture-book and sit down on the floor a little while. You can't very well fall there."

Freddy obeyed with alacrity.

"Aunt Ruth, here's Harry and his dog. The dog pulled Harry out of the water and he gave him a silver collar."

"Who, the dog?" asked Rob.

"Yes, the dog."

"And the dog led Harry around by a chain which was fast to the silver collar!"

"No, he did n't; Harry led the dog. I'm telling Aunt Ruth, not you."

Rob concluded he would try the lounge awhile. He could begin to help himself.

Fred went on with his story, raising his voice at every new sentence.

"Not quite so loud," said Rob.

"I've read my book all through," Fred began presently. "Can't I play with my blocks?"

"I'm afraid you will make too much noise."

"No, I won't. I'll be just as still as a mouse or a squirrel."

"We'll take the mouse part," said Rob.

So Fred began to build a tower. Of course, before he could get the top block on, down came the whole edifice with a crash. Rob, being just on the point of a doze, nearly sprang "out of his skin."

"Oh!" Fred exclaimed, aghast. "I was so sure it would n't tumble down!"

"Don't build a high one," said Aunt Ruth, softly.

"Just one more, auntie. I'll be very sure that it won't fall down."

"No, not one."

Fred knew he must obey that tone. At first he had a mind to kick the blocks to the four corners of the room, but a second thought warned him that such a course would not be prudent. But somehow he could n't get any low houses to suit. Presently he made a long inclined plane, when a happy thought popped into his head. He went very softly to his box, so as not to wake up Rob, took out some marbles and dropped them down the little square at the upper end. They rattled along, fell off the step at the bottom and rolled round the floor.

"O Freddy!" said Rob, "you are the noisiest boy that I ever saw."

"It's real mean for you to be sick! A fellow can't have any fun at all!" and Fred gave the nearest marble a vigorous kick that made it bound up against the wall.

Kathie had finished the parlor, and was going up stairs to sweep.

"I guess I'll take Fred along and amuse him," she said, "and maybe Rob can get asleep."

Freddy was delighted. He trudged up stairs, carrying the dust-brush as a great favor. Kathie made the beds, put away a pile of clean clothes, and then began to sweep. Freddy would run, to be sure, and when he helped dust, for he was delighted to work with Kathie, it proved a rather noisy operation, though she hoped they did not hear the sound very plainly down stairs.

She had just finished the rooms and put her dust-pan in the little square hall, when Freddy, who was following fast upon her and asking a multitude of questions, stepped upon something that tilted and made him jump. Clatter, clatter went the pan down stairs, bumping every step and spilling the dust.

"You put it right there in the way," began Fred, anxious to justify himself.

"I did n't think it was going to be in the way. I quite forgot about an unlucky little boy who meets with accidents on every side."

"That's because Rob's sick."

"The very reason why we ought to be still."

"But don't you know everything always happens

when you don't want it?" said Fred, with great earnestness.

"I believe it does. Now I've only the stairs to sweep, and you'll be in my way. Run in the kitchen and be just as good as you can until I come."

Fred went very reluctantly.

"Well, General," said Rob, "what was the last explosion?"

"There was n't any — any — splutter," Fred returned, slowly.

"We heard a great one and thought you had knocked the chimney over. Or was it you bouncing down stairs?"

Fred looked rather sulky and made no answer. It was a fine thing for Rob to lie abed and scold about everybody.

"I think Fred is the noisiest boy that was ever created," Rob went on; "don't you, mother?"

"Boys in general have a faculty of making a racket very easily."

"Don't you, Aunt Ruth?"

Aunt Ruth smiled. Just then Kathie entered the room.

"I'll leave it to you all," said Rob, "if Fred does n't

make more noise in a day than I ever made in a week."

A wise and roguish light came into Kathie's eyes, and Rob remembered their Sunday-night talk before he was sick.

"Do you really think I ever made such a continuous racket?" he went on, loath to give up his cause. "Why, it seems to me that Fred hasn't been still three minutes since he was out of bed."

"You notice everything so much more easily when you are ill," Aunt Ruth explained. "Fred has been rather unfortunate this morning, I will admit; but your mother and I have become so accustomed to noise that we hardly notice it. Though when one has a headache and the door slams —"

"That's me, Aunt Ruth," Rob said, soberly. "It always seems so much handier to push a door than to stop and shut it; and even if you only give it the least mite of a touch it's sure to slam. But I guess I shall think of it hereafter."

"One learns many of these things by experience. It is good to be sick once or twice in the course of one's lifetime."

Rob thought, while the dinner was getting ready,

that there were more giants than he had imagined at first. And then he watched Kathie, so cheerful and good-natured, with her bright look and ready smile and her quiet ways. He could n't be like that, for he was n't any kind of a girl-boy ; but he would begin to think a little about the comfort of his dear mother and Aunt Ruth.

He was quite sleepy after dinner, and took a good nap, shut in the parlor. Freddy had but one mishap, which was to tumble partially over the coal-scuttle in search of his ball. Kathie washed him, brushed his soft hair, and put on a clean blouse with a white linen collar. Aunt Ruth declared he was as sweet as a new pink.

After that, Rob thought he would try sitting up again. He was just nicely fixed in his chair when the Darrell carriage drove up. It had stopped raining, but was still cloudy and lowering.

Charlie helped Jessie out. She had a basket on her arm, and nodded smilingly as she caught the glance of Kathie's soft eyes. Then the little girl ran to the hall door.

"How is Rob getting along, Miss Kathie ? The doctor was in this morning to see grandma, and

he said he did n't believe a little company would hurt Rob ; so we came."

"He will be real glad to see you, and is sitting up."

This time she could usher Miss Jessie into the neat parlor, which she did very gracefully. Charlie followed behind.

"Well, Rob," said the soft, pleasant voice, "you look quite thin and delicate, not altogether equal to building snow-houses."

"No"; and Rob gave a faint smile. "But I'm getting better. I'll soon be out again."

Miss Jessie went to talk to Mrs. Alston and Aunt Ruth. Freddy sidled up to her and she kissed him. She seemed to be just as much at home as if she were some relative.

"We thought we would bring Rob a few things for a change," she began, taking the cover off her basket ; "there is a glass of strawberries that mother sent with her love, and they taste almost like fresh fruit ; and there's some wine jelly that Charlie and I made, and a nice cake that is n't very rich ; and here, Kathie, you may undo this."

A parcel wrapped in white paper ; but Kathie

detected the fragrance at once. She drew a long breath of delight, and held it before Rob.

“O Miss Jessie!” he exclaimed.

“Charlie said you liked flowers, so I thought I’d bring you some. They look so pleasant in winter.”

“What lovely roses! Three! Why, how many have you, Miss Jessie?” Kathie exclaimed, her face in a glow.

“O, perhaps a dozen out. We have quite a pretty flower-room. You must come and see it some time.”

Kathie arranged them very tastefully, — the three roses in the middle, a border of heliotrope, mignonette, and white alyssum, and a circle of rose-geranium leaves on the outside. Then she put them in a tumbler, and stood them on the mantel-piece.

“Why not have them on this little table, where Rob can see them better?” Miss Jessie asked.

Kathie changed them with her winsome smile.

Charlie and Rob had quite a school talk, — who had missed and who had kept their places, and all the details so pleasant to hear when one is shut out of the world, as it were. For it seemed to Rob as if he had been ill a month at least.

"Mrs. Alston, by next Saturday Rob will be well enough to go out, if he keeps on improving. Suppose he comes and spends the day with Charlie. It will make a pleasant change"; and Jessie's voice was almost irresistible.

"You are very kind," Mrs. Alston said.

"I 'll come for him in the carriage," announced Charlie, "and we 'll bundle him in the blankets so that he will not take a bit of cold."

There was nothing to do but consent. Kathie was delighted.

"And if you 'd come over in the afternoon," Jessie said to her, "it would be real pleasant. He might be getting homesick by that time."

Rob laughed at the idea.

They had a very delightful time and Rob was none the worse, having a good appetite for his supper.

"I used to think Charlie almost too girlish," Rob said to Kathie after he was lying comfortably in bed, "but I like him better than ever. He 's a real fine fellow, and I believe gentlemanly boys are the nicest, after all. Won't it be splendid to stay there a whole day?"

"I'm so glad they invited you," Kathie returned.

Rob was quite tired, but felt somewhat restless, so Kathie sang to him, and in a little while he was asleep. She put the curtain aside and glanced out of the window. It had cleared up and there were several stars twinkling in the rifts of blue sky. Was she shining on and on like the star? Was she doing her duty and being patient, generous, and kind?

"God help me to be just right in all things," she prayed, softly.

CHAPTER VIII.

CINDERELLA.

ROB improved rapidly. He had a tremendous appetite, and everything he came across was just about right. Miss Jessie's gifts were positive luxuries. And another very pleasant surprise happened in a day or two,—a call from Mrs. Grayson and Dick. Somehow Rob had n't kept up the acquaintance with Dick in a very earnest fashion.

"I thought you were coming over again," said Dick. "I've watched for you ever so many evenings."

"I did mean to, but there have been so many things, and my lessons to study in the bargain. I started for a prize, but I shall not get it now"; and Rob sighed.

"It's too bad," rejoined Dick.

"I had one last quarter, though it was partly a Christmas gift,—a splendid Robinson Crusoe! Is n't it odd that you never get tired of that book?"

Dick smiled. "I have quite a library, Rob," he said, "and if you 'd like to have some of my books, you would be perfectly welcome to them. I was sick once, and I found getting well the most tiresome part of it."

Rob thanked him, and then they had quite a school-boy talk about what they did at the academy and what they did at Mr. Johnson's. Rob told his friend the story of the snow-house and the play they had in it, and how they finally demolished it. Dick thought it must have been great fun, and wished he had been there.

The next Saturday was fine and sunny. Charlie Darrell came quite early, and Rob was delighted to step into the carriage and be whisked off to an enchanted country, as Kathie called it.

"I 'm coming for *you* in the afternoon," Charlie whispered.

Kathie nodded gayly as they drove away, and then she went to her sweeping. It was just like fairy-land, after all, for some rode off to enjoy themselves, and others, like Cinderella, stayed at home to work. She did n't envy Rob a bit, and was real glad to have him go. But she wondered a little if anything *very*

nice would ever happen to her. To be sure, going to the Darrells' in a carriage was something!

Very delightful she found it. Miss Jessie entertained them in a charming fashion. Kathie enjoyed the flowers and the birds, and especially the parrot, who had a droll way of winking and dropping his upper eyelid, and who could say remarkable things. Then there was the stereoscope with its beautiful pictures, and Grandma Darrell, who was very fond of children, and who told them stories of what happened when she was young. Indeed, Kathie glancing up by accident, observed to her dismay that it was nearly dark. Where had the afternoon gone?

"I think we must go home right away," she said. "Mamma told me that it was best for Rob not to be out after dark."

"But you'll go home in the carriage, so that can't make any difference. Supper will be ready in a little while."

Charlie uttered this in a most pleading tone and looked up with beseeching eyes.

"I think mamma did n't mean us to stay to supper," Kathie replied, frankly, "and it will be dark by the time we get home, even if we start now. Not

but what it would be very pleasant to stay, Charlie"; and there was a little quiver on Kathie's lip that came round to a smile.

"Kathie is quite right," said grandma. "It is always best for children to do *just* as they are bidden. Anything a little different to suit themselves, spoils the grace of the deed, and is n't *perfect* obedience."

"Charlie, you had better order the carriage," said his sister, "and I will take Kathie up to my room to put on her cloak and hood. We have all had a very nice time."

The child slipped her hand into Miss Jessie's, and it received a tender little squeeze.

"Do you know, Kathie, I think you are a brave little girl?" Miss Jessie said, as she was buttoning her cloak.

Kathie's eager eyes asked a question without a word.

"Because you showed so much decision in starting at the time your mother told you. I know you were enjoying yourself very much."

"O, I was, dear Miss Jessie. When I looked up and saw how dark it was growing, I knew we ought

to go home, but I *did* want to stay so much! It almost gave me a pain to say the words first, only it *was* right."

"And I don't coax you to stay, because I am pleased to see a little girl so ready to obey her mother. Some time you must come again and remain all day."

"I 've had such a lovely, lovely time! I 'm thankful for my own and for Rob's sake too. And I 'm glad you do not think I was — ungracious —"

Jessie stooped to kiss the pink cheeks. "I think you are a dear little girl. Is it easy for you to be so good?"

"Not always," said Kathie, honestly. "Sometimes I have to try pretty hard, and I 'm not very good either."

Miss Jessie smiled at this. "I fancy we all find it so."

"Carriage ready," sang Charlie through the hall.

Everybody kissed Kathie, and begged her to come again. Rob was bundled up like a mummy, he said, and away they all started, Charlie driving. Mrs. Darrell put in a basket containing something nice for Aunt Ruth.

They talked of their visit at supper-time. Fred thought it altogether too bad that he could n't have gone, — real mean, in fact.

"But I 'll tell you everything we did and all we saw," Kathie made answer. "I suppose they did n't ask you because there was n't any little girls nor boys to play with."

"I 'm not so *very* little," said Fred, with much dignity.

Rob managed to get along pretty well, and by the end of another week believed himself able for almost anything. His sickness had made him rather more thoughtful and gentle, and he resolved seriously that he would set about conquering some of the giants. He held himself in lower esteem than heretofore, and was more willing to find some good in Kathie.

One day a beautiful little note came for Rob and Kathie in a French envelope, and with an embossed "D," quite large and handsome. Kathie, being home the earliest, had the first sight.

"I do wonder what it is!" she said, turning it over in her fingers, and debating whether she *could* wait for Rob to come before she broke the seal.

"An invitation, I suppose," said her mother.

"O, I did n't think of that! 'D.' That might stand for Dorrance, but Sophie had a birthday party in the fall."

"And D stands for Darrell, too," exclaimed Aunt Ruth.

"Yes, but —" And then Kathie wondered whether they really would invite her to a party at the Darrells'.

"I think I will not open it until Rob comes," she said, presently.

Aunt Ruth smiled, and Kathie knew she was pleased with her resolve.

It seemed as if Rob would never return. He had met Dick Grayson and gone home with him, so it was dark, and Kathie was setting the table, when he made his appearance. She produced the note in triumph.

"Why did n't you see what it was? Guess I should n't have waited."

"I thought it would be a pleasure to you."

Rob was going to laugh, then he checked himself.

"It was real sweet in you, Kathie, so open it now. I 'm dying with curiosity."

The daintiest little invitation to Charlie Darrell's birthday party on next Tuesday evening. It was Miss Jessie's writing, of course, fine and elegant.

"Was n't he mum about it to-day, though? And won't it be splendid!"

"Can't I go this time?" asked little Fred.

"O Freddy, we're sorry; but it's a big children's party. I'll be sure to tell you all they do, and some time, perhaps, you can go."

"But it's too bad"; and Fred began to cry.

"It is real hard," said Kathie, in tender yet cheery tones. "Brave boys don't cry over disappointments; they would always be babies if they did, and you don't mean to be a baby, do you?"

"No-o," said Fred, over a big sob; "but could n't you ask Charlie Darrell to invite me?"

"Not this time, Freddy dear; but if Miss Jessie ever asks me to come again, I'll beg her to let me bring you along. You'll have a funny time talking to the parrot. It will make you laugh to see him wink."

"How does he go?"

Kathie made a droll face and rolled her eyes around sleepily, until Fred laughed.

"Now I must have that new suit of clothes," began Rob; "my old trousers are dreadful shabby."

Kathie remembered noticing the knees the Saturday they were at Mrs. Darrell's, and feeling rather mortified as she contrasted them with Charlie's every-day ones, which were so much better; she felt the force of Rob's demand instantly.

"Yes," his mother said, "you do need a new suit badly; and you may as well have it now as a few weeks later."

Rob was delighted with her ready acquiescence.

But the next day, when Kathie heard the girls planning what they were to wear, and several new dresses described, her own heart grew a trifle anxious.

"Mamma," she exclaimed that afternoon, as she was sewing away very industriously, "could you afford to buy me a new dress too?"

Mrs. Alston did not reply immediately.

"I suppose you could n't"; and Kathie's voice as well as her face fell a little.

"I really can't afford to get Rob's clothes. His being sick has spent me a good deal of time when I might have worked; then the extra fire consumed

so much coal that I must get another ton next week. There 's the doctor's bill also."

"O mamma, if we were n't *quite* so poor!"

Kathie's lip quivered, and before she was aware a tear dropped.

"My darling," her mother said, "I am so sorry to disappoint you. I think Rob needs his clothes the most; and I shall order them at Mr. Brown's and pay for them as I can. I have n't the money to spare now to buy you a dress; and your scarlet one still looks very nice. The white one, I suppose, is altogether too small."

"And there 's that great tear in the skirt, you know. Yes, I 'd rather wear the scarlet."

It was a severe trial to Kathie. The scarlet dress had been her only nice one all winter; and Lottie Thorne, who had quantities of pretty clothes, had declared that she must have a new dress or she would not go; she would be ashamed to be seen in any of her old ones at such a place as the Darrells'.

What if *she* did n't go? A great pang seized her heart. O, she wanted to so much! Miss Jessie had treated her as if she were the greatest

lady in the land ; and if it did n't make any difference to *her*, why should she mind ? But would she be happy when she saw the rest looking so gay and pretty ?

Kathie had many anxious moments on the subject. She knew she ought to be content, and she tried hard ; yet, in spite of her efforts, wishes and uncomfortable feelings would rush over her heart. Sometimes she felt that it would be better to give it up, then she thought she should be quite ashamed to say to Miss Jessie that she stayed at home because she had no new dress to wear. *She* would n't call that very brave ; and Kathie seemed to have a consciousness that it was a very mean kind of pride.

She hoped no one would ask her what she meant to wear, and she managed to evade a confession of her poverty until Monday. Then Lottie Thorne was seized with a teasing fit and bantered her ungenerously.

"She means to outshine us all, so she won't tell. White satin, I suppose, and lace and diamonds. You'll be the star of the evening."

"But you *have* a new dress, Kathie," said one of the girls. "Tell her and stop her talking."

Kathie choked down a big lump in her throat, and felt as if she must cry.

"I have n't any new dress at all," she said, desperately.

"You don't mean to wear that old scarlet thing?" was the next disdainful question.

"If I go I shall have to, for I can't have any other."

Kathie summoned all her courage to utter that, and then she resolved to stay at home. Rob made his appearance on the scene just then, so the girls desisted from their tormenting.

"Come, Kathie," he said, rather gruffly, "let's go home."

Such an invitation was very unusual from Rob, and Kathie was glad to get away, even if the shelter of his wing did look rather threatening.

"You're a little fool, Kathie," he began, angrily. "What did you want to tell them for, and have them all laughing at you?"

"I could n't help it, Rob"; and there was a great tremble in Kathie's voice. "Besides, it was the truth, and I think we ought not to be ashamed of that. But—I believe I won't go."

"Yes, you must; Charlie would be awfully disappointed if you did n't, and then he does n't care half so much for fine things as you girls."

That was rather cruel. "I 'm sure I would n't care if the rest did n't make fun of me"; and Kathie failed to choke off the sob this time.

Rob was silent, for conscience gave him a hard pinch. He remembered how glad Kathie had been about his new clothes, and how pleased she always was to see him enjoy himself. And here he had talked crossly to her and had been angry when she was not at all at fault.

"Kathie," his voice had a softened inflection, as if he was almost crying, and he slipped his arm around her waist very gently, — "Kathie, I don't seem to have much luck making war on my giants. I resolved, when I was sick, that I would never be cross or rough to you again, and I 've been both. I 'm sorry. I wish you had the new clothes instead of me. I don't deserve them anyhow."

"O Rob dear, my dress is good and pretty, only I 've worn it for nice all winter, and I suppose it does n't look real party-like. I 'm glad you came along just then, for it made the girls stop teasing me."

"Lottie Thorne is a hateful little thing! I guess I would n't be so ready to show her sums and all!"

Rob returned, decisively.

"That 's giants, Rob."

"Well, there's no use in my trying to be good."

"Yes, it is best for us all to *try*. If we don't succeed, there is a good endeavor which shows that we thought about it."

"Dreadfully discouraging, though."

Kathie glanced up with her bright smile, yet something like tears were still shining in her eyes.

"I believe you are the best little girl in the world, as Charlie Darrell says."

That was some comfort to Kathie. For the remainder of the afternoon Rob was quiet and helpful, and did not go out to play, but read stories to Freddy. When Kathie had gone to put him to bed after supper, Rob said, huskily, and in a rapid tone, as if he was afraid he should n't get through in time. "Mother, if I had given up my clothes could Kathie have had a new dress?"

"You needed the clothes, Rob, even if you were not going to the party."

"But — I'm sorry about Kathie. The girls are all making such a row over their new dresses."

There was a silence of a moment, half an hour it seemed to Rob, then he said, almost heart-broken, "Don't you care a bit, mother? Did n't you like to have pretty things when you were a little girl?"

"Can you keep a secret, Rob?" Aunt Ruth asked.

"O yes. What is it?" and he was all animation.

Aunt Ruth told him something in a very low tone, and if you could have seen his face! It looked like an April sky after a shower.

"O, I'm so glad! It's just splendid! If I could see it! Could n't I, mother, just a moment?"

Mrs. Alston opened the parlor and unlocked a bureau-drawer.

"Hush, Rob," she said, in a whisper, as he was beginning exclamations.

"But it's so beautiful! I'm just as happy now as I can be. I can hardly wait for to-morrow night."

"But you're not to hint it. Aunt Ruth made it nearly all to-day. We did n't think of it until this morning."

They heard Kathie coming down stairs, so they shut up the drawer and went back. Rob studied his lessons industriously, but every once in a while a great bound of joy rushed over his heart, and he could

hardly help jumping up and hurrahing around the room.

The next morning Mrs. Alston told Kathie to get ready early for school and she would buy her a new pair of shoes on the way, as she had several errands to do.

"Mamma, I've decided not to go to the party," Kathie said, bravely.

"Why?" and her mother appeared much surprised.

"Because I'm afraid I should n't feel real happy. All the girls are going to dress so much. They think because Charlie Darrell's family are rich —"

"But you see rich and poor have been invited. Miss Jessie knew that we could not afford to dress very handsomely. I think she and Charlie would be a good deal disappointed, and Rob also."

"Mamma, it is real hard to be laughed at, even when you know that you are doing just right. We could n't afford the dress, and I've kept myself from wishing for it; but yesterday the girls teased me, and I concluded that I would stay at home. I shall not mind. I'd rather go on some Saturday, if Miss Jessie should ask me."

“Would n’t you do it to please me?”

“Mamma!” Kathie’s voice was very entreating.

Mrs. Alston made no reply, and after a pause Kathie said, in a slow, quiet tone, “Yes, mamma.”

“Very well; I think you will be happy. And here we are at the shoe-store.”

To Kathie’s surprise her mother asked for bronzed boots. And there was the daintiest little pair that fitted her to a charm.

“I don’t need them *quite* so nice; do I, mamma?”

“Aunt Ruth wanted you to have them as a gift from her.”

“Cinderella’s glass slippers almost,” she said, with a smile.

Nobody teased Kathie that day, and everything went on smoothly. Rob stopped on the way home for his clothes and found them royal, but it was very hard work to keep his mother’s secret. They had an early supper, and then Aunt Ruth curled Kathie’s golden hair in a lovely fashion. Next she tried on her pretty boots.

“O, I feel as if I were Karen in the little red shoes, and could dance forever,” she said, gayly, making a lively pirouette around the room.

"Now Aunt Ruth must be the fairy godmother and touch you with her wand," Rob exclaimed, laughing, and when he was once fairly started he could n't stop. He looked so mysterious and comical that Kathie said, "What *is* the matter, Rob?"

"I can't help it"; and there was a suppressed convulsion.

Kathie viewed him in silent astonishment. Mrs. Alston left the room and presently returned with something that rustled, and she gave a quick turn.

"Now for the pumpkin and the mice!" and Rob could n't resist a shout on the war-whoop style.

Aunt Ruth held up the dress, but Kathie could not utter a word.

"Why, you little goose, don't you see what it is? Not satin, but elegant blue silk! You *will* be the queen of the ball!"

Kathie's eyes filled with tears. Children sometimes cry from pure gladness.

"O mamma, is it for me? Where did it come from? Why, I think I *am* Cinderella."

"I'm going to tell you just where it came from, for we could not afford to buy anything so handsome and expensive. Aunt Ruth had the dress when she was

a young girl, and the thought of it entered her mind a few days ago, so we concluded we would surprise you. Rob was let into the secret last night."

"Put it on quick, mother!" exclaimed Rob; "I want to see how she looks."

They had her dressed in a few moments, and Rob was recalled. He and Freddy went into ecstasies. She did look very lovely, for her cheeks were like roses, and the sweet expression of her face added a charm.

"There won't be as pretty a girl in the room," announced Rob, confidently.

"Hush, Rob. You must not make her vain."

"I don't believe anything could spoil Kathie. She's the best and dearest little girl in the whole world!" and Rob gave her a crushing hug.

Then Freddy took his turn, which was smothering, but Kathie bore it with the utmost patience.

"I'm so glad and so happy, Aunt Ruth! It seems just as if I was in fairy-land! Why, I can't believe it all. I'm almost afraid that it will come back to my old delaine dress when the clock strikes twelve."

"I guess not," said Aunt Ruth, smilingly. "I think you deserved something nice. But now you must

get your rubber boots and your cloak, for the time is going fast."

"I think I can trust you to behave modestly, Kathie," her mother said, with tender gravity.

"O mamma, I don't feel a bit proud."

"For all you're handsome," appended Rob.

"And dressed in blue silk," shouted Fred.

She kissed them all round and promised to bring Fred something nice. A very happy little girl was Kathie Alston, and Rob was delighted to the uttermost. She made him tell her how he came to find out about the dress, and her heart beat faster as she thought that he had cared so much.

"Your Highness is at the palace gate," announced Rob, with a great flourish. "The king's son for you, Cinderella."

CHAPTER IX.

CHARLIE'S PARTY.

THE Darrell mansion was lighted up brilliantly. It seemed to Kathie quite like entering fairy-land. Some brackets had been hung in the spacious hall, and Miss Jessie had arranged flowers upon them, trailing vines that looked so pretty drooping against the wall. There was quite a number of guests in the parlor, Kathie saw as she passed through. The girls were taken to Miss Jessie's room, and the boys to a spare chamber, as their host fancied they might like to beautify a little also.

There was Miss Jessie bright and smiling in the simplest of white dresses, with a blue sash and a blue ribbon in her hair, and a cluster of geranium leaves at her throat.

"Kathie Alston!" she exclaimed, stooping to kiss her. "Charlie began to wonder if you were coming." Then she helped take off her cloak, and Kathie thought she looked a little surprised at her dress.

It brought an uncomfortable flush to her cheek. Did Miss Jessie consider it too fine?

Kathie gave her curls a shake, and they came out all right. Then she went down stairs in a great whirl of excitement, hardly knowing who she was, and made a pause at the parlor door. Charlie was standing there and a cousin of his, a young lady about Miss Jessie's age, and she introduced the guests into the room. Now she said, "Miss Kathie Alston."

It seemed as if everybody looked towards her at once. Kathie had never known anything so dreadful in all her life. This time she blushed crimson and wished she was in her old scarlet dress, with the easy home feeling she usually enjoyed.

"O Kathie, how sweet you do look!" Charlie said, involuntarily.

Kathie thought she was surely going to faint; her head swam round, and the lights dazzled everywhere.

"O Kathie Alston," exclaimed a familiar voice, "where did you get that lovely dress? And you said you were going to wear your scarlet delaine. You told a story about it!"

Kathie was just ready to cry, and she wished from the bottom of her heart that she had worn her old one

"I did n't know anything about it until to-night," she said, in a choking voice.

"Was it a present?"

"Yes, from Aunt Ruth, and my boots too."

Having thus confessed her sins, she glanced at Lottie Thorne in a most deprecating manner. Some one put an arm around her neck. It was Mary Cox, and the next instant she had kissed Kathie's burning cheeks.

"You are the sweetest and loveliest girl in the whole room," she exclaimed, in her warm, extravagant fashion. "I'd give a kingdom if my hair curled like yours." For Mary's hair was black and straight as an Indian's.

Kathie took refuge beside Mary, who was always talking and laughing. Then she ventured to look round at the other girls. Lottie wore a lavender and white checked silk, trimmed with pretty pendent gimp. Sophie Dorrance had on her regular party dress, — pink tarlatan, ruffled, — and there seemed a perfect sea of bright, shimmering things.

They were all a trifle awkward at first. Miss Jessie came down and started some play. They stood in a ring with her in the centre. She said,

"Muldi Mustapha does so in the palace at Ispahan," and put one arm in motion; then another; afterward one foot; and then every head was nodded, and they all looked funny enough. Whenever a new thing was said, she repeated the whole sentence, and the catch in it was when she said merely "and so," without the rest. Presently she uttered "and so." Up and down went every head but hers, and then there was a general laugh.

"Everybody will have to go in the ring," exclaimed Charlie.

"I'll try it again," she said, good-naturedly; "but this time you must be sharp."

They all thought they would be, but half, at least, were caught. Of course there was another shout.

There was a great deal of fun over it. Kathie forgot all about her dress, and began to be very happy. They played until nearly every one had been caught, then Miss Jessie went to the piano, and two of the boys sang a comic song. After that they were fairly in motion. They had a game of pawns until they collected a pile of forfeits, when they went to work to redeem them. The first belonged to Dick Grayson, and it was held over Kathie's head. Dick

was to "stand in the well." He called upon Kathie to help him out, and then she called Charlie. So they went on, enjoying their fun amazingly, — pillow and key, still quaker, consequences, and lots of laughable games. Indeed, there were two forfeits still remaining when they were summoned to supper.

Kathie had been everybody's favorite. She was kissed for the prettiest numberless times, called out for all the plays, and in constant demand. Lottie thought it was her elegant dress, and began to envy her; but the truth lay in Kathie's being so thoroughly sweet and ready to please. She quite forgot about herself, and those who are always trying to make others happy are generally happy themselves.

Charlie took her out to supper. Dick Grayson made an imaginary attack upon him, and threatened to carry her off to some corner. Miss Jessie was at the head of the table, and Cousin Emily at the lower end. Very prettily arranged it was, with vases of flowers, and dishes of apples piled into pyramids, the little interstices filled with motto-papers; cakes, candies, and cream for the lighter part, and sandwiches for those who had played themselves hungry. There were Mr. and Mrs. Darrell and grandma, smil-

ing at the children's merriment. What a delightful time they were having! Kathie laughed until it seemed as if she could hardly stand up. Everybody was so very good-natured and enjoyable.

After supper Miss Jessie went to the piano, and the children had several quadrilles. It was twelve o'clock before any one thought about it; then a number of the children were sent for, and the rest began to prepare for departure. The large family carriage was put in requisition, and quite a host taken the first time, but Charlie begged Rob and Kathie to wait.

"Have you enjoyed yourself?" Miss Jessie asked, glancing into her smiling face.

"O, so much! Miss Jessie, I think it's such a nice thing to be rich. You can make so many people happy."

Kathie was so earnest that she could not help being equally frank.

"And it is nice to be able to enjoy pleasure. Nothing satisfies a person so well as to know that his or her efforts have been appreciated."

"Then you ought to have a good deal of satisfaction," said Rob, with a bright smile, "for I don't

think there ever was such a splendid party, and there has n't a single accident happened. It's been jolly all the way through"; then Rob blushed a little, and ended rather bashfully with, "I'm only a boy, Miss Jessie."

"And I'm used to boys' compliments, though Charlie is not very lavish in that respect."

"I don't believe boys ever are," said Charlie.

"They leave that for girls," suggested Rob.

"How about that, Kathie?" asked Miss Jessie.

"I guess boys do not always say what they feel, but girls like to have everything nice and pleasant, and —" Kathie made a long pause, coloring deeply.

"Express their gratification more freely," said Miss Jessie, coming to her assistance.

The carriage returned, and Kathie went for her wraps. "I've had such a lovely, lovely time," she said again. "I hope every one has been just as happy."

"You have a large heart, Kathie. I am sure you deserve a great deal of good fortune. I hope you will get it some day."

"We ought to send Fred some candies," Charlie said, as Kathie and his sister came down stairs.

Kathie had been thinking of this, but did not know exactly how to bring it about.

"I'll do up a parcel"; and in a few moments Miss Jessie had it ready, — to be given to Freddy with her love.

"And tell your Aunt Ruth that I'm coming the first pleasant day to take her out driving," she continued.

Kathie thanked her with her bright eyes and sweetest smile.

There were several in the carriage beside Rob and Kathie, and they talked of the party till one by one was dropped out, and last of all the Alston children.

Mamma was sitting up and Aunt Ruth lying on the lounge. The one little lamp turned low looked oddly enough after the brilliance of the evening.

"And so Cinderella comes back to her chimney-corner," she said, gayly, kissing them both. "Dear godmother, I never was so happy in my life. But first I felt too grand in my dress. I had to forget about that."

"I'm so glad you had it!" exclaimed Rob. "I saw ever so many of the girls staring at it. I guess Lottie Thorne was surprised enough. She thinks herself so grand!"

"But she was real sweet to me," said Kathie.

"Sweet! I'd like to know what there was to make her sour, unless she felt so because your dress was the handsomest. Mother, Kathie was the prettiest girl there, and up in all the plays. It was just royal! I wish some one else would give a party. And now I'm off for bed. Good night." Rob made a very tremendous bow, nearly standing on his head.

The next morning Freddy was delighted with his share of the feast. Kathie told him all she could remember, — how they had a menagerie, and every one could see just whatever animal he or she called for.

"But they did n't have real lions and elephants, — did they?" asked Fred, with big eyes.

"It was a looking-glass in another room, and you were taken in there and shown yourself. So if you asked to see a monkey, as several of them did, it was rather funny."

"What did you ask for, Rob?"

"O, I was let into the joke. Charlie and I were the porters, and kept the doors."

Then Kathie told about the other plays and all the amusing things that occurred.

"The Darrells are not a bit proud," Rob said, in a pleased and satisfied tone; "they never show off anything as if they thought it was so much better than what you had at home. You would surely be surprised."

"A very foolish and ill-bred thing for any one to do," said Mrs. Alston.

"Lottie Thorne's always at it. Last night she had to tell half a dozen times at least what her mother had, making it out a little better than Mrs. Darrell's."

"But Lottie is real pleasant," said Kathie, anxious to give her all her due.

"When you let her have her own way and listen to all her stories. Mother, I sometimes think Kathie has n't a bit of spirit. Lottie plagues her and makes fun of her, and is real hateful, and then Kathie helps her out of the drag."

"I should say Kathie had just the right kind of spirit," Mrs. Alston replied.

"But she's always sorry when she has been cross."

"So she says; but I don't believe it is true sorrow. She does the same thing right over again.

And I hate people who brag and make such a fuss over their own things. Miss Jessie does n't."

"Miss Jessie is a lady, and that one can be, rich or poor," Aunt Ruth said.

Miss Jessie fulfilled her promise a few days after this. The keen March winds had dried up the roads so that it was very good travelling. Aunt Ruth had a long, pleasant ride. It seemed quite like old times.

And then one day she called upon a little business, when a sudden shower came up, and she had to take off her hat and wait awhile.

"Mamma," Kathie said, in a whisper, "could n't we ask Miss Jessie to stay to tea? We have a nice cake and some cold meat, and we could fix the table real prettily; and when Rob comes home he will be so pleased."

Rob was off playing, as usual; yet since his sickness he had made quite an improvement in many things. To his mother this was deeply gratifying. But Kathie was a comfort to her daily and hourly.

"Why, yes," she said, slowly; then added, with a smile, "You don't feel troubled about the old carpet now?"

"Miss Jessie does n't mind; and when we give the best we can —"

"Those who love us accept the offering just as it is given."

So Kathie invited Miss Jessie. She smiled a little, and said, "That is hardly worth while; the shower will be over presently."

"But I'd like to have you so very much."

"Would you?"

The pleading eyes were most eloquent.

"Very well," Miss Jessie said, with a sweet smile.

Kathie left her to talk to Aunt Ruth a few moments while she went to mamma.

"If you would like to make some biscuits, Kathie, they will bake very quickly," Mrs. Alston said.

Kathie was delighted. Now and then she made biscuits and cake, and always had excellent luck.

There was a small storeroom off of the kitchen, where they could work when the weather was not too cold. Kathie tied on a large apron, prepared all her materials, and in a short time had a panful of nice round biscuits that raised up like pound-cake. Then she helped her mother set the table. She could n't but feel secretly glad that they had pretty

China, and silver forks, and some nice napkins. Mrs. Alston had not thought it necessary to give up all the refinements of life simply because they had met with a reverse of fortune. She had endeavored to so train her children that they would behave properly in any society, and had been most particular that they should not be awkward or ill-bred at the table.

"Now, Kathie, you may go back to the parlor," her mother said. "I've just put the tea to draw, and Rob will be in soon."

Miss Jessie had been entertaining Freddy as well as Aunt Ruth. Indeed, now she had him on her lap, telling him how the horse once ran away with her.

"But was n't you afraid?" asked Fred. "I should think girls would always be."

Miss Jessie laughed merrily at this.

"Not very much. We had a long straight road before us, and Hero was n't vicious. Now we have a horse that no one but papa drives, and his name is Firefly."

"O," exclaimed Fred, "one day Charlie and I were horses, and we rode Kathie home on Charlie's nice sled. My name was Firefly. I hope Santa Claus will bring me a sled next Christmas."

"What did he bring you last Christmas?"

"O, nothing much. Mamma said he was very poor, but I think he went to your house first and left that pretty sled. And I wanted a drum, but he did n't even leave that."

"He must have had your place down last, then; I hope he will do better next time, and not wait until his bag is empty. What did you have, Kathie?"

"A book of fairy-stories, and I like them so much."

"They are n't real true stories," explained Fred.

"But, Miss Jessie, some of them can be made true, and it is delightful to think of all the pleasant things in the world, if you can't have them."

"That is the true secret of enjoyment, Kathie, and you are fortunate to have learned it so soon. You can enjoy a great deal that belongs to another person almost as well as if it were yours, if you only have a happy, contented mind. Failing in that, no amount of pleasure or wealth will satisfy a person."

"And the best of all is to be happy and to make others so," Kathie said, thoughtfully.

"Have you been trying the last?" Miss Jessie asked, with a smile.

"Kathie is our little fairy," Aunt Ruth said, passing her arm around the child's neck.

"Then you turned the stories to some account?"

"O Miss Jessie, I can't do much, but I thought I'd try some little things"; and Kathie colored.

"That word *try* is like a magic wand. It has assisted me a good many times. You always look so bright and cheerful that one would guess you had access to the fairy fountain."

Rob had come in, washed his face and brushed his hair, and now opened the parlor door. Supper was ready also, and he invited them out after he had spoken to Miss Jessie.

They had a gay, social time. The party was talked over, and presently it came out about Kathie's dress, that had happened just like a fairy-story. They were not afraid of Miss Jessie, but felt perfectly at ease with her. She appeared to enjoy the surprise very much.

Rob was sorry that Charlie was not present having a good visit with them. It still kept raining, and Miss Jessie thought that she had better go home before it grew any darker. Kathie proposed that she should put on mamma's waterproof, and Rob took the large umbrella.

"I 've had such a nice time," she said, in her soft, pleasant tone, "and I shall come again real soon. But remember that you three children are to spend a Saturday with Charlie, and have a good long drive."

Fred was in ecstasies. Rob escorted Miss Jessie in a most gallant fashion, quite delighted with the honor. Kathie helped her mother wash the tea-dishes, and then she sat down in the corner in her little rocker.

"What makes you so quiet?" her mother asked, presently.

"Was I, mamma? I was only thinking what a pleasant visit it had been, and how sweet Miss Jessie is. And it seems to me that I don't mind being poor half as much as I did a month ago. Some of the girls always make a great time over what they have at home, and talk of their new clothes. It makes me feel as if they considered it quite a benefit to me; but Miss Jessie never does anything of the kind. I believe she would have been just as sweet if I had worn my scarlet dress to the party. And she is always so good, so much like Aunt Ruth."

Aunt Ruth smiled to hear herself thus praised.

"Miss Jessie is a Christian lady," Mrs. Alston replied. "She tries to follow the Golden Rule."

“I ’d like to be just such a young lady. Of course I ’ll never be rich, but I can do a good many things for you and Aunt Ruth and the boys. I want to be a comfort, so that you ’ll always be glad you had a little girl called Kathie.”

“My darling, I give thanks every day of my life” ; and her mother kissed her fondly. “I am truly pleased to have you satisfied with your station and your life, and to see you endeavor to look on the bright side of everything. If you cultivate this spirit, your life will be a round of enjoyment, even though toilsome. You are my bright little fairy.”

No, the fairies did n’t all live in palaces.

CHAPTER X.

KATHIE'S PRINCE.

ONE bright May afternoon Kathie was playing with two school friends, Lucy and Annie Gardiner. Mrs. Alston preferred that she should run out of doors as much as possible, and she had given her permission to stop on the way home from school, and spend an hour with her companions. They were out on the green in front of Lucy's house, playing "tag," and running like frolicsome kittens.

A gentleman walked slowly by them, but they were so engrossed that they hardly noticed him. By and by he halted and took a step backward, pausing near Kathie. "Can you tell me where Mrs. Alston lives?" he asked.

Kathie opened her eyes quite wide, then, remembering that it was not polite to stare, said, pleasantly, "O yes, only it is n't a very straight way from here. I'll show you."

"You can't go home, Kathie," exclaimed Annie,

with apprehension. "You have n't been here half an hour yet."

"I 'll just run to the corner and back"; so she turned to the stranger, who was a little in advance.

"There are several little houses just alike, — Cottage Row, it 's called. You go down this street two blocks, then you turn to the right and keep on until you come to an old stone house, and from there you can see them. The third one is —" mamma's, she was going to say, but she felt a little strange and substituted — "Mrs. Alston's."

"Thank you; I guess I 'll find it. Is this Mrs. Alston a widow?"

"Yes," Kathie replied, wonderingly, and then she watched him as he turned the corner. A kind of foreign-looking gentleman, very dark, and with a great beard; but now that she thought of it, it almost seemed as if she had seen him somewhere before.

"Kathie!" called Lucy. "Don't let him kidnap you. He looks like a — a —"

"What?" and Kathie laughed.

"Pirate, I guess."

"O Lucy! He 's quite handsome."

"Well, then he 's a Hungarian refugee, or a Pole.

The Poles are sometimes banished from their homes, you know. Never mind him. Let 's play again. You were *it*, Kathie."

They started off on another race, and yet Kathie found herself wondering if the man was a stranger, and if he had been banished to a far land. He looked sad and troubled, but what could he want with mamma? Yet the thought did not long disturb her fun. The girls all loved to play with Kathie, she was so good-natured.

By and by she ran in the house to see how late it was, although Lucy protested she had n't been there an hour.

"Yes, and five minutes over; I must surely go."

"Just let us have one more good run," pleaded Annie.

"If you 'll run down to the corner with me."

"I hope you will be as prompt and obedient when you go anywhere," Mrs. Gardiner said to her little girls. "Kathie, tell your mother that we shall have an abundance of strawberries, and some day she must send you over to pick a good pailful."

"Thank you," Kathie answered, with a delighted smile.

The girls went to the corner and kissed her many times, just as if they were not going to see her at school the next morning.

As she neared the cottage she felt quite curious to know what the gentleman could have wanted with her mother. All she could think of was some sewing. In spite of the misfortune of Rob's sickness, they were going to have a new parlor carpet; Kathie had earned a little money toward it herself. She had hemmed a dozen handkerchiefs for Mr. Darrell, who had insisted upon paying her very liberally, and then she had crocheted some edging. Only the day before she had persuaded her mother to go to the store and look at a very pretty one. So with the carpet, the stranger, and some sewing quite mixed up in her brain, she ran through the little dooryard, entered the kitchen, but heard voices beyond in the parlor.

"Kathie!" her mother said.

She threw off her hat and entered the room shyly. There sat the stranger with his arm around Aunt Ruth, and her face quite hidden on his shoulder. Her mother had been crying, and in a moment Kathie was full of anxious fear.

"This is my little Kathie," Mrs. Alston exclaimed, her voice still tremulous.

What had happened? What business had this stranger here making mamma unhappy?

"O, I saw her before; she directed me. Kathie, I'll give you three guesses to tell who I am."

That merry, mischievous twinkle in his eye was just like Rob's. O, it could n't be!

"Not Uncle Robert!" she said, with a cry.

Aunt Ruth raised her face, still wet with tears, but it looked very happy.

"Come and kiss me, Kathie; I wanted to take you up in my arms out there in the street. Uncle Robert, to be sure!"

Kathie glanced from one to the other. Was it really the truth? She had fancied Uncle Robert coming home, but to have him actually here!

The strong arms drew her down to his breast, and the sweet little face was covered with kisses.

"Why, Kathie," he began, "Aunt Ruth was sure that you expected me."

"But — we all thought — you were dead."

"You find that I am not. Alive and well, and glad enough to see you all, though for years and years I've thought you dead. I wonder I did n't guess when I looked at your face. Aunt Ruth used to have golden curls."

“O Aunt Ruth! Mamma! are n't you glad? Is it really Uncle Robert? and will you stay with us always?”

“Always, I hope, while God spares me.”

“Why, I can't believe it at all; and it seemed to me that Uncle Robert would be quite old,—something like Mr. Darrell.”

“Well, there are some white threads in my hair, and a few white whiskers, but I am not very ancient. I don't seem to remember much about the ark, and can't boast of an acquaintance with Noah.”

That made Kathie laugh. “O mamma, *are* you real glad? You look so grave and — as if it could n't be quite true. Why, I want to jump up and down, and shout as loud as I can, ‘Uncle Rob's come home!’”

Uncle Rob laughed then. Yes, his eyes were like Brother Rob's, only merrier, and with a soft, tender expression.

Mrs. Alston smiled, but the tears came in her eyes again; and Kathie understood then just how she felt, — that her heart was so full she could n't speak.

“You did n't know me, Uncle Robert?” Kathie went on; “and I never thought — O, was n't it

queer that you should have asked *me*, and that I should have directed you? I kept wondering what you could want with mamma. And Lucy Gardiner said maybe you were a Hungarian refugee, and was afraid you would kidnap me!"

"I did have half a mind to. Of course I never supposed that it was my own little niece Kathie; but I took a good look at your sweet face. I was so anxious to find you all, and it seemed as if I never should. I had called on several wrong Mrs. Alstons."

"Was n't that funny? When did you come home, Uncle Robert? Have you told mamma and Aunt Ruth everything? O, won't Rob be delighted? But where have you been all these years when we all thought you dead?"

"It's a long story, my little Kathie. I reached New York three weeks ago, after having been round the world."

"But why did n't you write?"

"I have written many times. It is so strange that no letter ever reached you, for I sent several to different friends. I've been away over ten years, and yet the time appears very short to me. I'm so glad to get back to you."

He kissed Aunt Ruth again fondly. "My dear sisters," he said, "how you have waited and suffered! My whole life shall be devoted to making amends for these years of absence."

There was a noisy raid at the kitchen door, and voices in high discussion. Mrs. Alston rose and went out.

"Might n't he let me have his top a teeny little while, mamma?"

"You don't know how to spin it, Fred; what's the use?"

"Hush, children. Freddy, wash your hands and face. There's a great stranger in the parlor. O Rob!" Mrs. Alston's voice quivered, and her eyes filled again.

"Dear mother," and Rob's arms were around her neck, "what *has* happened? I'm sure we were poor enough, and have had our share of misfortunes —"

"It's a wonderful joy, Rob. It has quite unsettled my nerves."

Rob kissed her and winked away a tear. Of late he had learned to love her better, and care for all her little anxieties. "Well, if it's joy, I think I can stand it. But I don't know of any one —"

"It is dear Uncle Robert, whom we all thought dead."

"Uncle Robert ! Hurrah ! Really and truly, mother ? Where is he, — in the other room ?" and Rob made a dash, then stopped suddenly.

Uncle Robert came out. "Here is the one I remember ; but he has changed, it must be confessed, from the wee baby with whom I used to frolic. Robert, my namesake, your mother ought to be proud of such a fine, manly boy."

Rob was seized with an unaccountable fit of shyness. This handsome great fellow, still young enough to be a boon companion in many things, was his own uncle ! He felt as if he had suddenly discovered a treasure.

"Me too, Uncle Robert," said Fred, rushing in with a sublime disregard of grammar and a scorn of common introductions.

"He recalls poor Fred," said Uncle Robert, taking him in his arms. "Dora, if the struggle has been hard, you have a nice family, and I 'm thankful they are all alive. While I live they shall have a father's care."

Kathie came too. "O Rob," she exclaimed, "I

can't make uncle seem a bit real. Does n't it sound like — like — ”

“ A fairy-story. Now, Kathie, here 's a real live one. He 's been in some enchanted palace seven years ! ”

“ And I was playing with Lucy and Annie Gardiner when he came along, and he asked me the way.”

“ Then I suppose he is *your* prince.”

“ That 's just it,” said Uncle Rob. “ She looked like a fairy out there on the hill, and she is to be mine. I 'll build a castle for her — ”

“ And take me too,” exclaimed Fred, enforcing his request with a thrust from his heel.

“ O Freddy, don't be so rough,” entreated Kathie. “ Uncle Rob, if you take me, all the rest will have to go.”

“ Are you everybody's good fairy ? ”

“ Mine especially,” said her happy mother, passing her hand over Kathie's shoulder.

“ But, uncle,” began Rob, “ where have you been all these years ? You must have travelled a good deal.”

“ I 've been half over the world, shipwrecked.

murdered, taken prisoner, run away, hunted elephants in India, lions in Africa, dug gold in Australia — ”

“ O Uncle Rob ! Mother, I want dreadfully to say ‘bully’ for this once ! And you ’ll tell me all about it ? ”

“ Let Uncle Robert get his breath. Don’t eat him quite up,” said their mother.

“ I should be doubly unfortunate if, escaping all those dangers, I fall into the hands of cannibals now ” ; and Uncle Rob laughed as he kissed them all round.

“ Kathie, we must be preparing some supper,” Mrs. Alston remarked.

“ We ’ll go entertain Aunt Ruth in the mean while ” ; and Uncle Rob marshalled the boys off to the parlor. It seemed as if everybody talked at once.

“ We ought to have something real nice,” Kathie said, reflectively. “ I ’ll make some biscuits.”

“ If you will run to the store I ’ll attend to that.”

Kathie found the basket, listened to her mother’s orders, and ran off cheerfully. Yet it was real hard to leave Uncle Rob, and she felt *almost* afraid that when she returned she would find it a dream. Just at the store door Miss Jessie passed her.

"Are they all well at home?" she asked. "Why, you look bright as a rose."

"O Miss Jessie, our Uncle Robert that I once told you about has come back."

"Why, I thought he was dead!" and Miss Jessie looked puzzled.

"But he is n't. He's come back alive and well and handsome, and I know you'll like him. He is going to stay with us always. It's just splendid!"

"Indeed it is," returned Miss Jessie, "and I wish you joy."

Kathie hurried home, and in a little while the supper-table was ready.

"Mamma," she said, with the last touch, "if we are poor, I think we are the happiest people alive."

Her mother smiled a little oddly at this.

Uncle Robert had already told the boys about an elephant-hunt where two poor natives were killed. They pitied them, to be sure, but concluded that it made the story more interesting.

"But what I want to know most," said Kathie, "is how Uncle Robert kept alive all the time, and came back at last?"

“ We will have a good talk after supper. It does seem strange. I can hardly realize it. To find you after so many years ! ”

Aunt Ruth and Mrs. Alston forgot how long and wearisome they had been. The future had brightened so much in a few hours.

They had a gay time at the supper-table. Uncle Rob was very entertaining and amusing. Kathie stole shy glances at him, and received a bright smile in return. Aunt Ruth looked so pretty with a faint flush on her cheek and a tender light coming and going in her soft eyes.

At last they were settled in the parlor, — Uncle Robert on the sofa with Aunt Ruth on one side, and Kathie on the other, and Fred on his knee. Rob brought a low chair as close as he could get it, and leaned his arm on his mother's lap.

Uncle Rob's story was a long one. Most of it had been told over in the afternoon, but there would always be freshly remembered incidents. He had left Bombay for a trip to Java, but deciding not to return, had sent for his letters. In some way they had missed him and been lost. He had waited awhile before writing, and then gone on a new tour to the

adjacent islands, where he and his party had been taken prisoners by a hostile tribe. Closely guarded as they were, escape proved almost impossible. He was seized with a fever and was ill for a long while, indeed, left to perish at last; but Nature proved a skilful physician. After he began to improve he met with an opportunity to go to Africa, and, thankful for any relief, he accepted at once. At the first available port he despatched a letter homeward, stating his intention of joining a company of explorers. Mrs. Alston having left the city, this also went astray. Having no knowledge of that fact he was quite easy in his mind, although it was a long while before he met with a chance to send again. Three years he spent in Africa, when he returned once more to India. No tidings there, and then he began to feel alarmed. He could hardly decide whether to go home at once or remain and try his fate a little longer. Then he resolved to go to Australia and make a fortune, and after that was achieved to come home and settle for life, unless those he loved were no longer living.

Here Uncle Robert paused a moment.

“And was there any chance to make a fortune?”

Rob uttered this in a slow, grave tone, and glanced up doubtfully.

"O," exclaimed Fred, "have you lots of money?"

"How much do you call lots?"

"Well," said Freddy, meditatively, "if you have a good deal, I'd like to have a stunner of a present next Christmas."

"Fred!" his mother exclaimed, in surprise.

Uncle Robert laughed. "What do you call a stunner, Freddy?" he asked.

"I'd like to have a sled bigger and handsomer than Charley Darrell's. Would n't I make her go down hill!"

Kathie's eyes suddenly grew large and luminous. She was glad to have Uncle Robert just for himself, but what if he had come home rich? Every pulse gave a quick throb.

"Well, Robbie, what would you have done,—stayed and made a fortune?" asked his uncle.

"Would n't I, though! Just give me a chance to dig gold! A pocketful of rocks would n't be anything. What did you do?"

Kathie leaned over breathlessly. Did such wonderful things ever happen to any one?

"I made the fortune. It was difficult work, and I do not know as money would ever tempt me to undergo such hardships again; but it is over now, and I'm thankful that I have something to share with you all."

"Hurrah!" shouted Rob; "Kathie, here's your prince, sure enough!"

"Was that what Kathie expected?"

"She's death on fairy-stories, and this comes out exactly like one."

Uncle Robert turned her face around so that he could look into the eyes now downcast.

"And you wished for a fortune? What would you do with it, Kathie?"

"O Uncle Robert, I never thought much about that, at least, not having it myself. I wanted to be a fairy and make everybody happy; but I've been learning that there are a great many pleasant and good things besides money, though that is very nice. And we should be glad to have 'you' even if you were — ever so poor."

"My little darling, I am thankful for all your sakes that I can make the rest of life very delightful and happy. I think those who are cheerful and

content in poverty will find much to enjoy in a wider sphere. And I'll promise to be your prince, Kathie."

She smiled tenderly.

"This is better than the party, — is n't it?" said Rob; "and I thought that splendid!"

"What about it?" asked Uncle Robert.

Kathie colored and laughed, but was not very ready in answering.

"O, I'll tell you," Rob began in great earnestness. "We have been poor all our lives, to be sure. If papa had lived it would have been different with us. I don't know as I've cared much about it, for I have managed to enjoy pretty good times, only now and then —"

Rob made so long a pause that his uncle said, "The party was your text. Don't let it get astray from your sermon."

"O yes!" and Rob laughed. Then he went on quite graphically, describing his own delight at the promise of a new suit of clothes, and his sorrow, when he came to think of it, that Kathie must go without; last of all the surprise.

Uncle Robert gave Kathie a hug. "That does

sound wonderfully fairy-like," he said. "I remember the blue silk dress, for I took Aunt Ruth to a party the first time she wore it. I'm glad so nice a thing happened to you, my little girl. Did you feel very grand?"

"O no; I almost wished for my old scarlet dress, and then I played until I forgot all about it. We had such a lovely time. Mamma, I met Miss Jessie by the store and told her the good news. Uncle Robert, I want you to see Miss Jessie. She is the sweetest young lady in the world."

"And they've such lots of things, — a parrot that can say real words, just as funny as he can be. O Uncle Robert, could you get me a parrot?"

Fred had been so quiet that they all thought him asleep, and they laughed at his sudden outburst.

"I guess we can find a parrot. Kathie, what will you have?"

"I don't know," she answered, slowly. "I'm afraid I shall want too many things."

"If uncle will give us three wishes," said Rob.

"Well, begin. Let us see what they are. Fred wants a sled and a parrot. What else? You can have one more wish, Freddy."

"Can I have a pair of skates? I think I'm big enough."

"Why, Fred, you are laying in a stock for next winter," said his uncle, gayly.

"But I can have the parrot on rainy days, when I have to stay in the house."

"Down in the cellar or up in the garret," laughed Rob. "You make so much noise that the addition of a parrot close by one's ears might n't always be agreeable. Or perhaps we can build you both a coop out in the garden."

"And could n't I take my dinner there, mamma, and live? Would n't it be fun?"

"Now, Rob, let us hear yours!"

"Three yards of black pudding —"

"Fast of your nose," appended Kathie, merrily.

"Don't interrupt me now, Kathie. It's serious business, and I must consider. First of all, I'd like a beauty of a sail-boat. There's such a lovely river here, Uncle Robert."

"Then you'll have to engage me as captain, and I shall ask a large salary."

"But could n't you teach me to manage a boat?"

"In the course of time. What else?"

"A real fine, handsome horse. But O dear, only one more!" and Rob made a comical gesture of despair. "Uncle, the purse of Fortunatus."

"O Rob, that will break me. I can't promise about that last. Kathie, it's your turn."

The child was silent some moments, then she said, slowly, "I don't know as you can give me what I would most like." She put her arms up suddenly and drew Uncle Robert's head nearer in range of her voice and whispered something in his ear.

"O, I heard,—a blue silk dress for Aunt Ruth, 'cause she gave hers to Kathie!" shouted Fred.

"A miss that time, Freddy"; and a sweet seriousness came over Uncle Robert's face. "I don't know, Kathie; you are a darling little girl to think of it first. That must be our secret, and we will talk it over to-morrow. Now another."

Rob looked as if he was trying to divine his sister's wish, but his uncle's face did not afford him the slightest clew.

"I'd like to have a pretty little cottage, Uncle Robert, if it would n't cost too much, and a lawn in front with beautiful flowers and trees."

"We might compass that."

"And a servant for mamma, so she will not have to work so hard."

"Nothing for yourself, Kathie?"

"Why, it's all for me," answered Kathie, in a surprised tone.

Uncle Robert kissed her. "You are a dear, generous little girl," he said, with deep feeling.

"And it's past eleven o'clock, so we must all go to bed," announced Mrs. Alston. "The rest will keep until to-morrow."

There was a protest against this, but Uncle Robert overruled it. Then the children made an onslaught upon him and kissed him nearly to pieces, he said.

"I am almost afraid to go to sleep, lest our castle tumbles down and Uncle Rob disappears," Kathie said, as she nodded her golden-crowned head at the door.

CHAPTER XI.

THE PURSE OF FORTUNATUS.

KATHIE knelt a long while at the side of her little bed, for she had such a great number of mercies to acknowledge. Uncle Robert would have smiled if he had heard the last clause, — that she might find everything true to-morrow morning. She was so happy and so excited that she could hardly go to sleep. How good and kind God had been to her, and to them all!

It seemed to Kathie that she had had just one little nap when she opened her eyes and found the sun shining. Mrs. Alston was hardly dressed.

“O mamma, *is* it true that Uncle Robert came home?”

“Quite true, dear. And now if you will get up, for I have overslept myself.”

Kathie was out of bed in a twinkling. She looked so merry and happy that Aunt Ruth fairly laughed.

“I do feel as if I could n’t hardly stay in my

skin," she said, gayly. "It's so odd and strange, auntie. I do really believe in fairies."

Kathie ran down stairs to wait upon her mother a little, then she came back and helped Aunt Ruth dress. By that time Uncle Robert's voice was heard, and he carried Aunt Ruth down in his strong arms.

"We did n't hear half last night," Rob began; "I've been wondering how you came home from Australia and found us out at last."

"We will have many a long talk about that, Rob," said his uncle. "I came to the conclusion, while I was in Australia, that you were all very happy and had forgotten about me. Now and then I used to write, always directing my letters to New York. When I was tired of Australia and satisfied with what I had made, I went to London. Putting my affairs in a good shape there, I decided to take a little trip through Germany and France. At Paris I met an old friend and learned for the first time that your papa was dead. This gentleman could tell me nothing more than that the family had gone to some country place; so I hurried back to London, and started at once for America."

"O Uncle Robert, Europe must be splendid! I wish I could go some time."

“Wish the fourth,” said his uncle, laughing; “yet it may all be possible.”

“And when you reached New York how did you find Brookside?” asked Kathie.

“I started first to find where you had gone. Your papa’s partner was dead also, and his family had removed to the South. I made inquiries everywhere among old friends, but no one could tell anything about you.”

“I think we were wrong in dropping all our old friends,” Mrs. Alston remarked; “but I felt so utterly disheartened, and found so much to do, that I neglected to correspond with any one. And I suppose most of our acquaintances had their own cares and interests, and so we faded from their minds.”

The oddest part of the search was, that I found two Mrs. Frederick Alstons,—one living out on Long Island, and one in Connecticut. Then a lawyer friend, to whom I applied, searched the record and found the name of the town in which your mother had bought a little property, sold by Mr. Golder. I felt sure that time of being right, and came hither directly. At the hotel I made some more inqui-

ries ; and once on the way, when I met a little fairy — ”

Kathie smiled at this.

“So I took your mamma and Aunt Ruth quite by surprise.

“Did they know you ? ” asked Rob.

“Aunt Ruth guessed first.”

“I remembered his eyes and his voice,” said Aunt Ruth ; “but the rest of his face has changed altogether.”

“And I remember his eyes,” said Fred, anxious to be heard on the subject.

Rob laughed heartily at this. “Does n’t your memory date back to the flood, Freddy ? I ’ve observed that it is n’t so good about more recent occurrences.”

Freddy looked rather cross at this.

It was decided after breakfast that Kathie might stay at home, as Uncle Rob desired it very much.

“You ’ll miss some fun,” said Rob ; “I mean to tell all the boys. O, won’t Lottie Thorne make big eyes ? I ’ll say that Uncle Robert is as rich as a Jew. I feel pretty sure that I ’ll have my boat.”

“Charlie will be so glad,” said Kathie, thoughtfully.

Uncle Robert spent most of the morning talking with Aunt Ruth in the parlor. Kathie assisted her mother cheerfully, though she could hardly bear to go out of his sight.

“O mamma,” she said, “how very happy we shall be! It is nice to have plenty of money.”

“And as generous a heart as Uncle Robert possesses.”

That was the great thing, after all; and Kathie hoped she would never be selfish or proud, no matter how much might come to her in the way of good fortune.

Uncle Robert asked her to take a walk with him presently, and she started off in a most delighted fashion.

“Now, Kathie, about the wish. Poor Aunt Ruth—”

“If she only could be cured! People are sometimes.”

“I think she can be helped very much. She has not been in circumstances to have very good medical advice. Some day she and you and I will take a trip to New York, and learn what can be done.”

"Uncle Robert —" Then Kathie made a long pause.

"Well, my dear?"

"I'd like to know" — and the color deepened in her face — "how much money we could spend? I don't want to be extravagant, — and we can be very happy with a little more."

"I think we can count on the purse of Fortunatus in a moderate way. I'll promise to keep a piece of gold in yours always. We'll have a new house anywhere you choose, and a servant as soon as we can find one. I wish we could do it this morning."

"O Uncle Robert!"

"My little girl, I mean to make you all as happy as possible. You are such a wise, prudent little body that I can trust you with this wonderful purse, and I'll be your prince to come and go at your bidding."

Kathie gave his arm a hug and glanced at him with eyes that looked the brighter for their tears.

"To have a pretty house, and if Aunt Ruth could be cured! Uncle Robert, it must be such a comfort to make people happy."

"Have n't you tried it on a small scale?"

Kathie blushed. "But it has been such a very little."

"I have observed that the people who have a desire to do a little under difficulties generally manage to keep their kind heart in prosperity. Riches bring us new cares, and we should strive for pure motives, also to be kept from too much pride and vainglory. No amount of fine and beautiful things do us any good if our hearts are not right."

"That is just what Miss Jessie says, Uncle Robert."

"I shall begin to be jealous of Miss Jessie."

"And that will not be right. Miss Jessie was so good to us while we were poor, and visited us, and— You must love her. Mamma and Aunt Ruth do."

Uncle Robert laughed.

"Somehow I can't believe it at all," Kathie went on, after several moments' seriousness. "I was just becoming content with poverty, and learning what to do for mamma. Not but what I am very glad and thankful, still I seem a little afraid, as if it was only a dream."

"You need not have any doubts, Kathie. If you should grow up to womanhood as sweet and simple

as you are now, you will be able to do a great deal of good and make many people happy."

Kathie studied Uncle Robert's face for some time, then she said, gravely, "Do you always think of the good, uncle?"

"I am trying now, Kathie. There was a time when I sought my own pleasure without reference to any other object, but I trust it will never be so again."

"And what made you think first?"

"I was very sick once in Australia, and all alone. It's a hard place when one is not well enough to rough it through, for there every man cares for himself, and never minds his neighbor. I thought I should die, and then I wanted God; so like the Psalmist I cried unto him day and night."

"And then —" There was a sweet, grave light in the child's eyes.

"Something very curious happened to me. An old miner, a man who had been an English convict, found me one day and nursed me back to life. It seemed to me just as if God sent him. And though he was n't what some people would call religious, there was an earnest, simple clinging to the light, an un-

usual sense of honor and honesty. Well, I recovered, and took the man in my employ. About a year after that he died, and in ministering to him I learned another lesson that I hope I shall never forget."

"What, Uncle Robert?"

"Doing the good that comes right in one's way. Our Saviour must have meant this when he said, 'The poor ye have always with you.' So it is not worth while to look very far for work. But I think you have managed to find it as well, and I am glad that you have been such a comfort."

Kathie did not reply immediately. Uncle Robert saw that she was revolving some grave subject in her mind, and presently asked her what it was.

She smiled a little. "I wonder," she said, "if it is easy for people to be good?"

"What has been your experience on the subject?"

"O Uncle Robert, I've had to try very hard sometimes when it almost seemed as if I did 'nt want to. I used to stay and play with the children after school, and though it appeared only a few moments to me, it was a great deal longer, and mamma wanted me at home. But some of the girls thought it was mean, and one day Charlie Darrell asked me why I was so queer?"

“Did you tell him?”

“No, Uncle Robert; it does n't seem right to talk much about those things.”

“The best example, Kathie, is a quiet one. Just as soon as we begin to parade our good deeds before the world they become a snare. I know it is hard *not* to be appreciated, but this comes in time. There's a higher reward than being seen of men.”

Kathie gave Uncle Rob's hand a little squeeze.

“And now, Kathie, we will have a little talk about the new house. Do you like Brookside, or would you rather go to some other place? I believe I have a great fancy for a little country town, and it does n't make any difference to mamma and Aunt Ruth, except that I think Aunt Ruth's health would be better in the country.”

“O, I don't want to go away,” Kathie said, with a gasp. “I like all the girls so much, and Miss Jessie —”

“Then let us take a walk among the pretty places. I thought I saw some yesterday.”

“Mr. Grayson lives in the nicest part of the town, I think, but —”

“But what?”

"They 're very handsome," said Kathie, slowly, "with lawns and barns and carriage-houses." Then she glanced up at Uncle Robert, doubtfully.

"And cost a great deal of money, — was that what you were about to say?"

Kathie smiled and colored.

"We will take a look at them, at all events. I expect you to grow up a young lady in this house, and I want it pretty and comfortable, with a good deal of room."

Kathie walked slowly along, revolving these things in her mind. She had thought only of moderate wealth, but such grandeur startled her a little. So she grasped Uncle Robert's hand tighter, until he looked down into the perplexed little face.

"What 's the trouble now?" he asked, cheerily.

"Not exactly trouble. Uncle Robert, I think you are very generous to come back and spend so much on mamma and the rest of us."

"If your father had lived, Kathie, it is not probable that you would have known any want. He was beginning to be very prosperous when I went away, and he possessed a large, noble soul. I am going to take his place as far as I can. I want a

pleasant home for myself, and I expect you to be my little girl, so I shall give you all the advantages in my power."

Kathie's eyes filled with tender tears. Looking around at the bright world on this sunshiny day, she thanked God softly for all his blessings.

"Here is Mr. Grayson's," she said, as they turned into a broad avenue, lined with wide-spreading elms.

Mr. Grayson's was certainly a very pretty country-house, roomy, with a large lawn sloping down to the street, a wide, vine-covered porch across the front and one end, a deep bay-window, and a profusion of handsome shrubbery.

"Very cosey and home-like. Now if we had such a house —"

"As handsome as that!" ejaculated Kathie.

"Quite as handsome"; and Uncle Robert's eyes had a merry twinkle in them, which showed how much he was enjoying Kathie's surprise.

"This is a lovely part of the town," he said, at length. "Over beyond is the river."

"Silver River, because it is so clear. That's where Rob wants to go boating, but mamma does n't like to have him."

They went to the end of the street. Here the river broadened, making a pretty little lake. In fact it was only a slender arm connecting the lake with Guilford River.

Just at this point, facing the lake, stood a rather deserted-looking mansion. The shrubbery around was luxuriant but untrimmed, the flower-beds had gone to weeds and grass the fall before, and presented a very untidy appearance.

“Does any one live here?” Uncle Robert asked.

“No. It belongs to a Mr. Tompkins, who had it rented out awhile. I believe some one died and left the place to him; but don’t you think it’s dreary?”

“It could be made very pleasant. If this space down to the lake was cleared and transformed into a lawn, — you see lying to the south would add a great charm. There are some noble old trees around. And this is n’t very far from the depot, while it is quite removed from the manufactories. If it was touched with an enchanter’s wand — You don’t half believe in my unlimited powers, Kathie. When you come to find a piece of gold always in your purse —”

At this Kathie laughed.

"Here is Mr. Darrell's," she said, turning into another street. "It always seems so bright here."

"Suppose Miss Jessie was haughty and Charlie a disagreeable boy? Is n't it the pleasant association that makes a place bright?"

"I believe it is," she answered, thinking of the happy Saturday so long ago, when it seemed so hard to come away.

Going round by the school, they found that it was twelve o'clock, for the children were just being dismissed.

"How fast the morning has gone!" Kathie remarked, and then, looking over, she nodded gayly to the girls.

Rob ran across to them. "O, has n't it been jolly!" he began. "I've had lots of fun this morning, and I told Charlie that I thought I'd have a boat."

"Where's Freddy?"

"O the little lag-behind! He's somewhere."

Kathie looked as if she must go and find him. But while she was debating he emerged from the crowd, and they all went homeward.

Mamma had dinner prepared. Aunt Ruth had

tied a ribbon in her soft hair and looked quite girlish.

"We will have to go out again this afternoon," Uncle Robert said to Kathie. "We must find mamma a servant, so that she will be a little more at liberty. And if there's a horse to be had we might take a drive."

Kathie's eyes sparkled.

"You're having all the fun," exclaimed Rob.

"There will be a good many days in which to have fun," rejoined his uncle.

They had a long, serious talk after dinner. The house was altogether too small, even if there had been no other fault, so Uncle Robert proposed that they should have a new one as soon as possible. He had hosts of traps in New York and wanted a place to accommodate them. If no one lived in the Tompkins house, that might be purchased and rearranged to their liking. They drove past it and took another look. It was rather pretentious. A two-story bay-window, and one corner of the house built up in turret fashion with a cupola on the top. "There must be plenty of room," Uncle Robert said, and that was just what they wanted. The apart-

ment on the second floor containing the bay-window should be Aunt Ruth's, on account of the nice southern outlook. And they would all go in there to spend their evenings.

"Something of an air-castle until we learn whether it will be sold or not," he went on, with a smile; "but as Kathie is fond of the fairy element in real life, we will not mind."

They found a servant who promised to come the next day, and went home quite well satisfied.

"Now for the purse," Uncle Robert said in the evening, producing a gold piece; but Kathie laughingly confessed that she had never owned one. "Then Aunt Ruth must lend you hers. Now, here is a veritable purse of Fortunatus, and it is never to be empty."

"Can't I have one too?" said Fred.

"I'm afraid you and Rob do not understand the mysteries of fairydom quite so well," he answered, with a comical face.

"But, Uncle Robert, I'm afraid I shall never have a chance to spend it."

"Then it will never be empty," explained Rob.

“That is n’t in the bargain,” said his uncle.
“Kathie and I know how to manage, I think.”

Kathie went to sleep dreaming of her gold piece that was never to fail. Had she really been transported to fairy-land?

CHAPTER XII.

AN ENCHANTED COUNTRY.

THERE was a great time at school the next day. Kathie was besieged on every hand. Was it really true that her uncle had come home, and was he ever so rich? Were they going to live in New York, and keep a carriage?

Mary Cox gave her a warm squeeze. "I 'm so glad," she said, "though I could n't love you any better if you owned the whole world."

"Was n't it queer that man should be your uncle?" asked Lucy Gardiner. "Don't you feel a little afraid of him?"

"Afraid! Why?"

"O, he has such a great beard!"

Kathie laughed gayly. "He 's just delightful," she said.

"And I suppose you will have lots of beautiful dresses," was Lottie Thorne's comment.

Kathie had n't thought of that, and she felt as

nice in her pink gingham as if it had been silk.

Just after school was dismissed Miss Moore beckoned her to the desk, and put her arm around the little girl, kissing her fondly.

"I must congratulate you, Kathie," she said. "I am very glad that such good fortune has befallen you; but there is another thing that pleases me nearly as much."

Kathie's soft eyes questioned her teacher.

"I have observed a very great improvement in you since Christmas. You have always been studious, but, like the majority of children, quite thoughtless. It's very natural, I suppose; but of late you have grown orderly, and always seem to be studying the pleasure and comfort of others. And now, my child, I hope nothing in your new life will induce you to forget this good beginning."

"I have been trying pretty hard," Kathie answered, as a little flush quivered over her face. "I used to forget so easily, but I'm learning to put everything in its place, and not make trouble for others. Fighting giants, Aunt Ruth calls it."

"You make pretty steady war upon them."

"O Miss Moore, I want to be good, first of all."

"You are in the right way, Kathie, but you will find it difficult work. There is nothing like perseverance."

"It seems to me that everything will come easier. Why, I 've been so happy since Uncle Robert returned that I hardly know myself. Then to think of mamma and Aunt Ruth —"

"While you carry them so close to your heart you will not be in much danger. And I wish for you a happy, useful life."

It was all pleasure, Kathie thought. Uncle Robert was so good-natured and untiring, full of merriment, and always planning charming surprises. Aunt Ruth seemed to grow young every day, and the careworn look faded out of mamma's face.

After one or two consultations, inquiries were made about the house to which Uncle Robert had taken such a fancy. He learned that it could be purchased for a very moderate sum, much below its real value. It was considerably out of repair, and the grounds needed rearranging. He, Rob, and Kathie were first to inspect it, and she was very much interested.

There was a nice wide hall through the middle,

with a spacious parlor on one side, larger than that at the Darrells'. A library with the bay-window, a dining-room adjoining, and at the end of this a large conservatory. There were two or three kitchens in the rear, and on the next floor four handsome sleeping-rooms, with one smaller one over the conservatory. Rob took a great fancy to the tower, and thought he and Fred would take possession of the third floor, so as to be handy.

"Handy for what?" asked Kathie.

"O, a ghost. There ought to be a ghost here."

"I hope not."

"You would n't be afraid, Uncle Robert?"

"Not much," said he, with a droll smile.

"There are no such things as ghosts," Kathie returned, with an assumption of bravery.

"Go up in this tower on a dark night!"

They mounted it now and were charmed with the prospect. As the house stood on a slight elevation they could see all the neighboring towns, and Brookside lay at their very feet.

"O, I do like it!" Kathie exclaimed with enthusiasm.

"This will be Point Lookout," said Rob. "O, I

wish we were on the sea-shore and could see the ships go by."

"It may serve some other useful purpose," replied his uncle.

"When Fred is particularly noisy he can come up here and racket to his heart's content."

"I once heard of a man who used to have bad tempers when the wind was in the east; so he built himself a little room which he called a growlery, and when he felt ill-humored he could retire to it," Uncle Robert said.

"Do you think we shall need a growlery?" asked Kathie.

"Rather a dungeon to put our giants in," said Rob.

Uncle Robert looked from one to the other for an explanation.

"Kathie and I fight giants sometimes," Rob returned, with a rising flush.

"Which of you is the better warrior?"

"Kathie," Rob said, frankly. "I mean to, but I forget."

"And what are the giants, — bad habits?"

"That's it, Uncle Robert. I believe it is easier for girls to be good than for boys."

"It requires some resolution and perseverance on either side. I'm glad you are both taking the giants before they have reached their full stature. But now we will go down and look at the grounds. If you can think of anything you would like very much you may make some suggestions."

"A boat-house," proposed Rob, with a merry twinkle in his eye.

"I think we will have to see about that," said his uncle. "Kathie, would n't it please you too?"

"I'd like Rob to have the boat. I believe I am a little afraid, and mamma has not been willing that I should go on the water; but she would n't object with you."

"Girls always squeal so when they're frightened," Rob announced, rather disdainfully.

"We will have the boat another summer, if not this. I think there will be a great deal on hand. We shall hardly be moved and settled before September."

Rob looked surprised, for it seemed to him the whole matter ought to be accomplished in a month.

"Uncle Robert," Kathie began, "I'd like to have a pretty summer-house out here, where we could play when the girls came to see me."

"It would be very nice. When the place is cleared up you may select a spot."

As it was growing dark they started for home. Just before they reached the cottage one golden star came out, and Kathie remembered the night she went to the baker's, and how it seemed to run on before, looking so bright and happy. Had she been like the star?

Uncle Robert bought the place, and carpenters, masons, and laborers were set to work immediately. The walls needed repapering, for having been shut up so long they were quite discolored. For this and several other matters he deemed it necessary to go to New York.

"And now, Kathie, we can see if your wish is practicable," he said. "I told Aunt Ruth how anxious you were for her recovery, and she is quite willing to try any means that may be thought best; so I believe I will take you and her to the city with me, and we can have an opinion on the case."

"Oh!" Kathie exclaimed, eagerly, "dear Uncle Robert, I shall be so glad if it can be done. Then there would n't be anything left to wish for!"

"I don't suppose she can be entirely cured; but if

she can get about easily that will be a great improvement. I wonder how long it will take mamma to get you ready?"

Kathie flew to inquire. Her mother had been making her several new dresses,—not half so elegant as Lottie Thorne thought they ought to be.

"You'll be a real little dowdy, Kathie Alston," she said, rather spitefully; but Kathie was very well satisfied. She remembered how uncomfortable she had felt at first in her blue silk.

After a little discussion the first of the next week was appointed for starting. When Rob heard of the proposed journey he felt quite envious.

"Seems to me you come in for all the nice things," he said, rather crossly; "I don't see why I could n't go too!"

Kathie interceded for him in her sweetest fashion.

"It is quite impossible," replied Uncle Robert. "In the first place, boys are restless fellows; and he would want to go everywhere and see everything, while I prefer just now to devote all my spare time to you and Aunt Ruth. He would prove too great a charge for me. Do you feel very badly about it, Kathie?" for he saw how sad the bright little face had grown.

"He would like it so much ; and if you explained it all to him I think he would n't make much trouble."

"My little darling, I hate to refuse that tender heart anything ; but Rob would have a much better visit alone, and I should feel relieved not to have him this time. He must learn that it is necessary to give up some desires in this life."

"But it seems to me that I have everything."

"Because you keep your wants so small, Kathie ; and that is the great secret of enjoyment."

She could n't help pitying Rob, and easing his disappointment by the promise of going another time. He was inclined to be ungracious at first, quite forgetting that it was not Kathie's fault.

On Monday their trunk was packed and sent off by express. They were to follow at their leisure. Aunt Ruth had improved a good deal in health ; but then she always was better in the summer. Kathie thought she looked especially sweet in her soft gray dress and bonnet, with a little cluster of forget-me-nots falling at one temple. It seemed so strange to go away on a journey, for Kathie had never been farther than the next town since she could remember.

Rob was delighted to drive them over to the station, and thought it would be royal when they had horses of their own. He looked after Kathie with longing eyes as she waved her hand from the car window, and gave Aunt Ruth a cheery smile. The locomotive uttered its shrill whistle, and away they went. It was June then, and the country was lovely everywhere. The houses and trees and winding river flew by them like dissolving pictures. Kathie held her breath from sheer surprise.

Though she enjoyed it very much, it was rather tiresome to Aunt Ruth, who was used to sitting in an easy-chair or lying on the lounge. By noon she began to look quite pale, and Uncle Robert asked if they had not better stay and rest at the place where they were to change cars.

"No, I think I'll go on and rest at the end of the journey," she replied.

They stopped long enough to get some refreshments. Kathie declared she was 'most starved, and was very sorry that Aunt Ruth could not eat anything. Uncle Robert took her out for a short walk around the depot, and when the bell rang they hurried back. A little after three they reached New

York. Kathie was almost stunned by the noisy shouts, and looked around in a startled fashion. Everybody sprang up and rushed out of the car.

"We will sit still until the crowd has dispersed," Uncle Robert said; so they watched the passengers, and several times Kathie had a good laugh at some comical incident.

"Now I 'll go find a hack," and Uncle Robert rose. He had made Aunt Ruth quite comfortable by pillowing her with shawls.

So the two were left alone. There was n't very much fun looking out of the window now, and in a few seconds Kathie felt quite strange and lonesome. Then a man came in and began to turn the backs of the seats over. He glanced sharply at Kathie and her aunt, as if he wondered what they were doing there.

"Don't you think Uncle Robert stays a long while?" Kathie whispered, timidly.

"He will be here in a moment," was the reply.

The cars gave a lurch and started on. Kathie turned pale, but before she could speak they stopped.

"O Aunt Ruth, what if we were to be taken on somewhere?"

"We shall not be"; and Aunt Ruth smiled.

"If Uncle Robert only *would* come!"

"There he is."

Sure enough, smiling gayly as if he had not been away more than a moment.

"O Uncle Robert, I thought you were lost!"

He patted the perplexed little face. "I should have to take leave of my senses first, before I could be lost in New York. Now, if you will carry the shawls, I'll take Aunt Ruth in my arms. O, here's her crutch too. I will come back after that."

Kathie followed down the long platform. A driver was holding open the coach door, and Uncle Robert placed the invalid tenderly within. Then he handed up Kathie and sprang after them, and the door shut with a click. Off they rolled. Kathie glanced out of the window.

"O Uncle Robert, does n't it look queer? What lots and lots of houses! And how we do joggle! Won't it hurt Aunt Ruth?"

"It will be easier when we turn out of this street."

"Uncle Robert, where *do* all the people come from?"

He laughed. "Why, the streets are quite thin now! An hour or two later and there will be a crowd."

Kathie was silent from astonishment. "What beautiful stores!" she said presently. "Why, Uncle Robert, it is like fairy-land."

"We will take a walk down Broadway some day, and you will think it more wonderful than ever."

They stopped in front of what seemed to Kathie a palace. She felt quite strange because there were so many people standing round, and it appeared as if every one stared at her, so she clung very closely to Uncle Robert.

"Why, Conover!" said a frank voice. "Who ever expected to see you here? Can I be of any assistance?"

"Meredith!" returned Uncle Robert. "I'm glad to see you. I believe I left you climbing the Alps. Will you take charge of this little girl and a shawl?"

It seemed to Kathie that he looked wonderfully like Uncle Rob, for he had a full beard and eyes that sparkled with fun. He picked up the shawl and drew Kathie's hand just through his arm with the utmost ease and grace, leading her through the hall and up

the wide stairs that were soft as a cushion. She felt quite lost as she entered the parlor, for a deep glass coming nearly down to the floor showed her herself and Mr. Meredith, and one opposite gave back the same picture.

"This is my sister, Miss Conover," Uncle Robert said as soon as she was seated in a great crimson arm-chair, "and this my niece, Miss Kathie Alston. My friend, Mr. Meredith, Ruth, whom I met in Europe."

"I'm right glad to see you, Conover, and if I can be of the slightest service, command me to the utmost. It will be a charity to find me some employment."

Kathie could n't help smiling. Mr. Meredith's voice had such a merry ring, and he shrugged his shoulders so oddly.

"You can entertain the ladies while I find a room. I hope we shall not have to go up to the skylight."

"You can step in the elevator and come down," rejoined Mr. Meredith, "or enjoy yourself like the German student who lived in the first story if you entered by the chimney."

"Scaling the roofs beforehand? I've turned quiet and sensible."

"The excuse that is generally made for laziness."

Uncle Robert bowed himself away, and Mr. Meredith began to talk to Kathie, who told him very frankly that this was her first visit to the city, although she had been born there.

"There will be a great many things to entertain you then. I shall petition for the situation of escort several times. I hope we shall get on famously together. I have a niece just about your age, and we have gay times."

"Does she live here?" asked Kathie, timidly.

"Only awhile in the winter. My brother's residence is a short sail up the Hudson. I'll try and persuade Mr. Conover to go there some day. Do you like to sail?"

"I don't know," Kathie answered, a little doubtfully.

Uncle Robert came back presently. He had secured two very nice rooms, and their trunk, having arrived, had been sent up already.

"O Uncle Robert, I don't believe I ever could find my way around this place," Kathie said, amazed at the stairs and halls.

"I'll have to hire a guide as they do in the Catacombs."

The rooms were very cosey, and to Kathie's inexpe-

rienced eyes extremely elegant. Aunt Ruth was so tired that she begged to be laid on the bed at once.

"You must be housekeeper and settle the things," she said to Kathie.

Uncle Rob unlocked the trunk and helped Kathie unpack. They hung up the dresses in the wardrobe, and laid the smaller articles in the drawers. Kathie was so neat and handy that she quite surprised Uncle Rob. In a few moments they were all in order.

"What can be done for you, my dear, tired sister?" Uncle Robert asked.

"I wish you would order me some tea and toast, and if Kathie will help me to undress, I shall be more comfortable. Every bone in my body aches."

She did look very pale and tired. Uncle Rob went to his own room, and then Kathie bathed Aunt Ruth's face and hands, brushed her hair smooth, put on a nice fresh night-dress and arranged the pillows.

"It seems so odd to go to bed in the afternoon," she said, with a smile.

"I can rest better in this manner."

The toast and tea came up. Aunt Ruth did n't seem much hungry; but Kathie fed her just as mamma used to feed Rob when he was sick, and presently she declared herself quite refreshed.

"You are a most charming little nurse, Kathie," said Uncle Robert; "I shall be tempted to fall ill some time."

"Not here," returned Kathie, entreatingly; "I should get lost the first time I ventured into the hall."

Aunt Ruth sipped her tea until she began to feel rather sleepy; then she told Kathie to get ready for dinner and go down with Uncle Rob, and during the quiet she might manage to get a nap.

So Kathie brushed out her shining hair and put on a white dress. Uncle Robert tied her blue party sash after he came in, and then, kissing Aunt Ruth many times, they went down to the parlor.

"Here's a veritable fairy!" exclaimed Mr. Meredith. "Will you sit here by the window? How is your sister, Conover?"

"Very much fatigued. I brought her to New York for medical advice. A number of years ago she had a bad fall, which crippled her; but having known some wonderful cures myself, I have faith to believe that she can be helped. I should like to meet a skilful and honorable physician, and learn just what could be done, for I should n't want her subjected to any unnecessary suffering."

"I have an old uncle who is held in high repute by medical men generally, and I'd like you to see him, Conover. You may be sure that he will tell the truth. He does n't attend to anything but office practice except sometimes for an old friend; yet I think he could be persuaded to come here and see her."

"Very kind of you, indeed. I feel rather strange here now, and the people I used to know have mostly forgotten me. A great many changes occur in ten years."

"Have you been away that long?"

"Nearly eleven years; but I realize the lapse of time more by the alterations in all I see here than in my own experience there. I regret deeply that I did not return sooner; but for a long, long while I never heard a word from home."

Mr. Meredith was a good deal interested and began to question his friend. As travelling acquaintances in Germany they had learned very little of each other's past life, though much pleased with the chance encounter.

Kathie looked out of the window, greatly amazed at the sight. A procession of people appeared to be

going up both sides of the street, and in the middle an interminable confusion of carriages, omnibuses, drays, express-wagons, and, it seemed to her, everything that could be put upon wheels. Occasionally a brave pedestrian ventured across the street, running between the horses, in imminent danger of having his head bitten off or being trodden under foot, she thought. Then a strange, sharp clang sounded through the rooms, making echoes everywhere. She sprang up and glanced at Uncle Robert.

“Only the gong,” he answered, laughingly. “Now we will go to dinner, for I dare say you need yours.”

With her hand in Uncle Robert's she went to the long dining-hall. The children's supper at the Darrells was nothing in comparison. Kathie was too well bred to stare about or show her surprise. To be sure, the tall waiter standing behind, bowing and asking rapid questions, rather disconcerted her. Uncle Robert took pains to make her comfortable, and Mr. Meredith was very agreeable. Kathie stole a glance now and then at the long rows, — ladies very handsomely dressed and fine-looking men chatting gayly. It was like a story.

“What a little lady that child is !” Mr. Meredith

said in a low tone to Uncle Robert. "You must certainly go up the river with me one day. I want Ada to see her."

Uncle Robert looked very much gratified. He ran up stairs presently to see how Aunt Ruth progressed, and brought back a favorable account.

"Does n't she want me?" asked Kathie.

"Not unless you are too tired to stay down here."

Kathie said she was not. The parlors were lighted up and looked enchanting. One after another sauntered in, and presently a lady began to play on the piano. Some friends of Mr. Meredith found him out, and formed quite a circle about them. He brought one lady to introduce to Kathie, a very sweet-looking person, to whom the child took an instant fancy. Mrs. Havens asked her if she was there alone with her uncle, and Kathie said they had come with her aunt, who was an invalid. This led to quite a conversation on the subject, until suddenly her eyes felt as if there had been a leaden weight attached to them.

"Uncle Robert," she said, when there was a pause, "if you please I will go up stairs." Then she bade them all good night.

"A charming child!" exclaimed Mrs. Havens. "We must manage to see the aunt to-morrow, for I am much interested in them. I knew some Alstons a number of years ago, but I don't suppose it is her family."

Kathie talked a little while to Aunt Ruth, then put her clothes away in an orderly fashion, said her prayers, and crept in beside the invalid.

"It seems so lonesome without mother and Rob and Freddy, — does n't it? And though I 'm tired and sleepy, I don't believe I can ever go to sleep. There 's such a noise in the street, and I 'm not used to living in palaces."

But a soft little laugh was the last sound Aunt Ruth heard.

CHAPTER XIII.

GALA-DAYS.

WHEN Kathie woke the next morning the elegant lace curtains with their gilt cornices and the marble-topped bureau with its carved mirror-frame met her eyes. She rubbed them dreamily, wondering where she was. Then she sat up in the bed and listened to the noise without.

"O Aunt Ruth!" she exclaimed, glad to find a home face.

There was a little tap at the door, and Uncle Robert's cheerful voice asked if they were in bed yet.

"No," said Kathie, hopping out on the floor, "but I'm just up, and will be ready in a few moments."

Aunt Ruth felt quite rested. After Kathie was dressed she assisted her, and then they admitted Uncle Robert, who was glad to find them so much refreshed.

"Do you feel strong enough to go down to breakfast?" he asked of Aunt Ruth.

"O, do!" pleaded Kathie. "It's so odd and pretty down there, and there are such crowds of people."

"It will look quite different by daylight," said Uncle Robert.

"But you can't help liking Mr. Meredith, and Mrs. Havens is so sweet, something like Mrs. Darrell. And she wants to see you."

Then Uncle Robert told what Mr. Meredith had said about his uncle. He was to call on Dr. Markham that morning and ask his advice.

Presently they went down. The dining-hall did look rather sparse and straggling. They crossed over to a table at which Mrs. Havens was sitting.

"Good morning," exclaimed Mr. Meredith, joining them. "I was afraid some of your kinsfolk had spirited you away."

"Who?" asked Kathie.

"Why, the people in green."

"So you have found out her relatives?" asked Uncle Robert.

"Have you brought your wand and your invisible cap, to say nothing of the unfailing purse?"

Kathie laughed at this. "I believe I have a purse," she said, "but I have never tried it."

"Invite me to go out with you ; will you not ? "

She glanced at Uncle Robert. "I 'm afraid you do not understand the charm," she answered, slowly.

"I 've a great mind to pack Mr. Conover off to the country, and take you in charge myself," he returned.

It was half past nine when they returned to the parlor, Kathie thought they were rapidly falling into lazy habits. The two gentlemen prepared for their walk, and Mrs. Havens proposed entertaining Kathie and her aunt. Indeed, in the course of the morning's talk, she discovered that she had been acquainted with Mr. Alston's family. He had no nearer relatives than uncles and cousins, and after his death they had not interested themselves especially in his widow, as is too often the way of the world.

The morning passed very pleasantly indeed. Uncle Robert returned with the news that Dr. Markham had promised to call on Aunt Ruth that afternoon. Mr. Meredith persuaded Kathie to take a walk with him, and after their late lunch they started.

"We will go down Broadway first," he began, gayly. "They don't charge much for looking at

pretty things, and we will both make believe that we have come from the country."

Kathie made a sudden pause. Three of the oddest people she had ever seen in her life were coming towards her. They wore flat straw hats, had one long braid of hair hanging down behind, carried parasols, and were so strangely dressed that she could n't tell whether they were men or women.

"Are they *real* Chinese?" she asked, timidly.

"The pure article, — packed in tea, standing on their heads, and imported at great expense; warranted not to spoil in any climate."

Kathie looked very doubtful after this explanation.

"Yes. Some distinguished strangers visiting the city. Your Uncle Robert has lived among them, I believe."

"How comical they do look! I should n't want to be Chinese."

"Well, I can't say that I have any particular desire for a pig-tail and rat diet. Now here is a store of curiosities. It is almost as good as traveling round the world."

They entered, and Kathie went from one thing

to another in the greatest surprise. Toys and articles of *virtu* imported from every corner of the globe. She wanted to buy some for Freddy, but she could n't tell which to choose.

"O, we will come in again some day," Mr. Meredith said. "There's ever so much more to see."

And so she thought as they went on. Mr. Meredith explained everything in the gayest manner imaginable, told her odd stories about the woman who sold apples and nuts at the corner, people who begged for a living, and the organ-grinders. They went up in the belfry of Trinity Church, and it seemed to Kathie that they could see all over the world. Then they strolled into the Museum, but the play being half through they did not care for that. Afterward Mr. Meredith stopped an omnibus and they rode down to the Battery. Here he entertained her with some of Irving's anecdotes of the early Dutch settlers, after which they returned to the hotel.

Aunt Ruth was in her room, so Mr. Meredith took Kathie up, and there she found Uncle Robert.

"Has Dr. Markham been?" was her eager question.

"Yes," he answered.

"And what did he say? O Aunt Ruth —"

Uncle Robert took her on his knee. "My little girl," he began, "it will be a long and tedious affair, but Dr. Markham thinks she can be so far restored as to dispense with a crutch. There would have to be a very painful operation, and Aunt Ruth would be compelled to remain in the city for several months."

"Now?" Kathie asked with a little awe.

"He does n't advise it until September. There will be no danger to Aunt Ruth's life, and he seems quite hopeful. He is coming again to-morrow with a skilful surgeon, and after we hear all we shall decide."

"I should be sorry about the pain, but, Aunt Ruth, if you could walk easily, how delightful it would be! I should n't like to have you away —"

"You will have to come and be her little nurse."

"O, if I only might!"

Uncle Robert kissed the generous girl.

Then she told what a gay time she had with Mr. Meredith. "And I wanted to buy ever so many things, but I could n't make any choice."

"We will take our turn to-morrow morning. You must put on your wishing-cap, for I'm afraid the purse will never be brought in requisition."

"But you get everything for me," she said, earnestly, "and for mamma and the boys. I really don't know what to do with money."

"An unusual complaint," he said, laughingly.

The following day was very fine, and they took quite an early start.

"Now you must have large eyes, Kathie," her uncle said.

"What are you going to do?"

"Buy ever so much for our new house. First, I think we will look at wall-papers. Since I am here I may as well get all the things there would be any difficulty about in a small town. They can be sent by express very easily."

They went to a large paper-warehouse. The clerk began to unroll some elegant things. Uncle Robert looked them over very indifferently, Kathie thought, while she was silent from surprise. At length she uttered an involuntary exclamation.

"So you like this crimson?" he said, much pleased.

"Now, Kathie, we can have our library or our

parlor furnished with crimson; which shall it be?"

Kathie considered a few moments. Red carpets and curtains always looked so cosey and bright, and this paper with its stripe of rich deep crimson between the gilt was so very pretty.

"Or we can have the crimson in Aunt Ruth's room."

"O, that will be just it," returned Kathie. "Green, I suppose, does look more like a library."

"And there's a paper just this pattern with a green stripe. See how beautifully it contrasts with the pearl of the panels."

"Let us have that for our library then, and this for Aunt Ruth's room. And for the parlor something very delicate."

"Then there's the dining-room, which must be in oak. We have quite an arduous task before us."

They compared, discussed respective merits, and finally made their selections. Then the furniture was to be chosen.

This interested Kathie wonderfully. There was such a variety; all were so lovely. Great luxurious

chairs of every description, in which one might dream away hours. Two were especially comfortable, — a rocker and a reclining-chair that could be turned into a bed at a moment's notice. Both were in crimson plush.

"These must be Aunt Ruth's," Kathie said, "unless —"

"Well?" Uncle Robert smiled good-naturedly.

"I think they will cost a good deal," she ventured, timidly.

"That part of it you are not to mind," he returned.

"I begin to believe you are a fairy prince."

So Kathie had a gay time, her wishes being answered as soon as expressed. But Uncle Robert noticed that she was continually thinking of others, and seemed to have very little anxiety about herself. So he told her he was going to choose the furniture of her room, and she was not to see it until it came home.

Afterward came the carpets. It was quite late before they were through, and they hurried back to the hotel just in time to meet Dr. Markham and his friend. Kathie remained in the parlor with Mrs.

Havens, rather fatigued with her morning's work, and glad to rest.

It was determined in the evening that Aunt Ruth would come to the city in the fall and undergo the operation. Dr. Markham proposed to take her to his house, where he could have her under his immediate supervision. He was quite sanguine of success.

Mr. Meredith was very anxious to have them all go up the river to his brother's, but Aunt Ruth thought it too tiresome for her. She insisted that Kathie should not be deprived of the pleasure, and one lovely morning they started. The sail was delightful. Guilford River, that had seemed remarkable to Kathie heretofore, shrank into insignificance. Beautiful green shores rising higher and higher until broken by the frowning rocks of the Palisades! Kathie held her breath in wonder. It was like entering an enchanted country.

Mr. Meredith enjoyed Kathie's surprise and pleasure. She was so sweet and unaffected, and thoroughly appreciated the efforts made to entertain her. More than one of the passengers watched her as she rambled up and down, talking in her pretty fashion, her soft eyes and winsome smile brightening with every word.

There was a carriage at the landing, awaiting them. Miss Ada had come down with the driver, and greeted her uncle and her guests very cordially. She was not as pretty as Kathie, and had a proud air that might not be pleasant at all times ; but now she was charming.

The drive home was short, as the house stood but half a mile from the river. It was a very handsome place, and elegantly furnished. There were several younger children ; but Ada had a room to herself, fitted up in a lovely manner, Kathie thought. There was a tiny sofa, a bookcase, well filled, and some pretty pictures ; a cottage bedstead, with the whitest of counterpanes and dainty ruffled pillow-cases.

The two girls compared notes. Did Kathie have a piano, and could she play and sing and draw ? Did she go to parties and have beautiful dresses ?

Kathie felt rather embarrassed ; but, in turn, she told about the snow-house, and how they enjoyed sledding down hill in winter. Rob and Freddy came in for a fond remembrance.

“I think children are a great bother,” said Ada, “and I ’m glad that we have a nurse. You don’t take care of your little brother,—do you ?”

"O yes; I don't mind it very much, though; but sometimes he is quite troublesome. Only I think we always love our family so well that it is a pleasure to care for them."

Ada shrugged her shoulders.

"Can't we go in the nursery?" Kathie asked, presently.

"Yes, if you like"; and Ada led the way to a large, plainly furnished room, strewn with toys, and containing four occupants,—a nurse and three children. The baby was a sweet little girl of about four.

Kathie held out her hands and she came at once.

"Why, how odd! Florence is generally shy of strangers"; and Ada looked surprised.

But Kathie's sweet smile had won the little one.

"What a pretty name,—Florence! If I had such a darling little sister I should n't want ever to go away from her."

Ada smiled rather indifferently as she replied, "But I have so much to occupy my attention, and I don't love to take care of children."

The boys began to make shy advances to Kathie. She told George about her little brother at home; and Willie asked if she did n't know any stories.

But Ada had no intention of her visitor's wasting so much time upon the children.

"I want to show you my piano," she said, "and we will take a walk in the grounds. Uncle Edward said I was to entertain you."

"Don't go 'way," pleaded Willie, holding fast her dress.

"Ask Miss Kathie if she will not call on us again," prompted the nurse.

"Ada won't let her," George appended, rather crossly.

"Hush, Georgie; that is n't nice."

They had a great time kissing Kathie, and begging her to come again. Then Ada took her down stairs and played for her quite a while. The music interested Kathie very much, still she could not help thinking of the little children in the nursery. Presently they were summoned to lunch, and afterwards the whole party rambled through the grounds. Mrs. Meredith then proposed a drive, as they would have just about time before the boat returned.

Mr. Meredith came down stairs just as the girls were putting on their hats. "Kathie," he exclaimed, "those little rogues in the nursery insist upon saying another good by to you; will you come?"

She was delighted to comply; and the children would have almost devoured her if Uncle Edward had not interfered.

"She will never dare venture in this lion's den again," he said, with a laugh.

The drive was delightful. Mrs. Meredith was very cordial in her invitation for them to come again, and Ada regretted that Kathie's stay must be so short.

"I begin to have some wants," Kathie said that night, sitting on Uncle Robert's knee; "I'd like to have a piano and quantities of nice books, and a pony. Ada has such a pretty one. Will my purse buy them all?" and she looked archly up in his face.

"You don't know until you test it."

"The visit was very pleasant," she said to Aunt Ruth, when they were alone; "but I could n't help thinking that Miss Jessie makes you happy by doing everything your way, just as if she had asked you what you liked most, and Ada thinks her way is so much better that you ought to be pleased with it as a matter of course."

Aunt Ruth smiled. "That is the germ of selfish-

ness, Kathie, and people in Ada's circumstances have many temptations to yield to it. Only by striving very hard can it be overcome. And since my dear little girl can see it, she must endeavor to strive against it."

There were several more very busy days, and at last Kathie tried her purse. She bought a set of books for Rob, he having read stray ones and liked them very much; and she saw a most elegant little locomotive with a train of cars, that, being wound up like a clock, ran all over the floor. That must be for Fred. But then in dismay she found that she had not money enough. Just as she laid the last piece on the counter there was a glitter before her eyes, and sure enough her store was immediately increased.

"But if I should be away from you, Uncle Rob?"

"O, it's part of the bargain that you always take me along."

"Now I'd like to buy something for mamma, — a gray silk dress, just like Mrs. Darrell's."

After quite a search they found it. Kathie laughed each time her purse was replenished.

"But you have bought nothing for yourself!"

"I believe I don't want anything just now."

"Very well," Uncle Robert said, a merry twinkle dancing in his eye a moment.

Mr. Meredith was very sorry to part with Kathie, and promised to come to Brookside as soon as the new house was in order. Several of the ladies besides Mrs. Havens had taken a great fancy to her, for she had proved herself so sweet-tempered and engaging.

"I should be real sorry to go home if it was n't for seeing mamma and Freddy and Rob, but that seems so delightful. And I wonder what they have done to the house! Then there's Miss Jessie and Charlie, and all the girls. Yes, I believe I do want to go home."

It was royal to see them all again. Freddy nearly kissed her to death, until presently Rob said, "Come, Fred, give me a chance. Remember that I have n't seen Kathie for 'most a fortnight."

Fred opened his eyes at this, not exactly taking in the meaning.

"Dear mamma," Kathie said, "I'm so glad to get back to you! It has all been splendid, and I have seen ever so many nice people; but you are the best and sweetest of them all."



JOHN ANDREW-SON.

Two trunks came from New York instead of the one they had taken. The largest Kathie was to unpack herself.

"I tried my purse, Rob, and here 's what came out of it for you ; and O, here is mamma's share !"

"You might ha' brought me something. It 's real mean " ; and Fred's face was the picture of woe.

"Just wait and see."

She took out a large package and began tearing off the wrappings. Fred watched with anxious eyes. Kathie lifted the cars carefully out one by one, linked them together, and wound up the locomotive.

"There, Fred, you can go to Boston a dozen times a day."

He capered around the room in a most delighted fashion and declared that Kathie was the best girl in the whole world. Then he ran back to give her a hug and a dozen kisses.

"But what are all the rest, Uncle Robert ?" Kathie asked.

"Go on and see."

Two flat and nearly square packages, each bearing a card containing briefly, "To Kathie, from E. M."

"O, that 's Mr. Meredith. And— what lovely,

lovely pictures ! They are just what I liked so much one day when he took me to a store to see Little Red Riding-Hood. Did you know it, Uncle Rob ? ”

He laughed a little.

“ And here ’s something from Mrs. Havens. Mamma, she used to know papa, and has seen you. She was so sweet and pleasant to me.”

A very curious Japanese work-box and carved sandal-wood fan. Kathie glanced first at these and then at her beautiful chromo-lithographs. They were all such a great surprise to her. Mr. Meredith would have enjoyed it very much.

Then in the bottom of the trunk were several new dresses Uncle Robert had bought her, — dainty printed pique, and two white ones.

“ And what did you buy for yourself out of your wonderful purse ? ” asked Rob.

“ O, nothing at all, and I don’t think I needed anything.”

As Kathie glanced up she met Uncle Robert’s eyes. There was something in them that touched her deeply, a kind of approval and appreciation that told her he loved her better for her unconsciousness of self.

Kathie found herself quite a heroine at school. That she had stayed nearly two weeks at a hotel on Broadway gave her a wonderful prestige. There would have been great danger to her self-esteem if she had not thought constantly of the temptations in the way.

"What a splendid uncle you have!" Lottie Thorne admitted.

"And that I should think him something dreadful" said Lucy Gardiner, penitently.

"He is a real prince, and every night and morning I give thanks to God for sending him home," was Kathie's response.

CHAPTER XIV.

HOME.

ROB and Freddy never tired of hearing about Kathie's trip to the city. The Museum, Central Park, High Bridge, and the rides in cars and omnibuses, always had a fresh interest for them. The old women who sold apples, the boys hawking papers, and the great markets, lost none of their charm or quaintness, for Kathie possessed quite graphic powers of description.

In the mean while the new house progressed rapidly. The papering was very handsome, and the painters added their skill. The grounds were cleared, and a rustic summer-house was commenced for Kathie. The place presented a very different aspect from what it did six weeks before.

Kathie had taken Uncle Robert to call upon Miss Jessie, and made him acquainted with the whole family. Their admiration was mutual, and Charlie declared that Rob was a lucky boy to have such an

uncle fall from the clouds. He was delighted to hear some of his adventures.

"Kathie is n't a bit proud," he said to Jessie after they had gone. "She does n't seem to feel any grander than before."

"I think little Kathie Alston in poverty, trying to render her mother's burdens lighter and make every one around her happy, was as grand as any royal princess. I rejoice warmly in her good fortune, for no one ever deserved it more, and she will improve it wisely, I have no doubt."

Just at the edge of the grounds stood a small cottage that had been rented out to some rather uncomfortable tenants. Uncle Robert had the place vacated and put in order.

"Now we must have a man living here who can attend to the garden and look after all little matters. Kathie, do you know of any one among your poor folks?"

For Kathie somehow found out a great deal about poor and sick people. She could n't do much towards relieving them, it was true, until she came in possession of her wonderful purse, and that had been called upon quite often.

"It's so nice to surprise people and make them very happy," she said to Uncle Robert one day. "It seems almost like being a fairy."

And when he applied to her now she thought a little while.

"There are several real old people, but we want some one to work as well, — don't we?" she asked.

"Yes; we cannot have them quite for ornament."

"O Uncle Robert, I know of some one," she exclaimed presently, "and he is n't very old either. He was hurt in the mill last summer, and is a little lame. When mamma did n't want to take in sewing any more, she recommended his wife to Mrs. Grayson and several other ladies. They have two little children. Suppose we see what Aunt Ruth thinks of it?"

They were walking home when this conversation occurred, so they entered the little parlor where Aunt Ruth sat reading. She had plenty of leisure now.

Kathie began at once, for when she espoused a cause she was a very warm partisan.

Aunt Ruth said, "Mrs. Morrison has been in this afternoon, and she feels quite discouraged, for her

husband had a promise of being employed at the mill again, but just now business is dull, and they cannot take him until in the fall. If we could do that for him I should be very glad. Hugh Morrison has been a good son to his poor old mother, who now feels herself a sad burden on them in their straitened circumstances."

"Could n't we go and call upon them?" asked Uncle Robert.

"O yes"; and Kathie started up with alacrity.

"You will be sure to see Mr. Morrison now," said Aunt Ruth.

So they started, and after a short walk came to what was called the tenement-houses, a row of rather dilapidated buildings. After being sick half the winter, Mr. Morrison had found retrenchment absolutely necessary, and they had moved hither because the rents were lower.

Kathie walked in and introduced her Uncle Robert very gracefully. Old Mrs. Morrison, white-haired and placid-looking, sat in a large rocking-chair with a year-old baby on her knee, while a little boy stood beside his father, who was repairing the clock.

Uncle Robert began a pleasant conversation, and gradually led the way to business. He found Mr. Morrison an intelligent, practical man, and was very well satisfied with him. Everything about the house looked clean and orderly, though it was plain.

"A man with a family does n't have much chance to get forehanded," Mr. Morrison was saying. "Wages are low, and every week lost in the dull season counts. Sometimes I've thought of going to the West; but it's a hard thing to get started."

"I believe my niece has an offer to make you, Mr. Morrison, and it may be as advantageous as trying your fortune elsewhere," Mr. Conover made answer.

"O Uncle Robert, it is n't really mine. I only said —" and Kathie paused, blushing deeply.

"Well, you may say it over again"; and he smiled, encouragingly.

"It's to come and live in the gardener's cottage at our new house," Kathie said, hurriedly, seeing that she was expected to speak.

"We want a lodge-keeper and gardener, some one who will look after the place, and since you were brought up on a farm I think you might do very

well. Kathie mentioned you when I was making some inquiries."

"O Miss Kathie, I 'm so grateful to you!" and a quick tear sprang to Mr. Morrison's eye. "It 's just what I would like above all things. I 'll try never to make you regret your good word. And Mary will be overjoyed. I wish she was at home."

"I 'd like you to come as soon as you can. We expect to take possession in the course of a fortnight, and it seems quite difficult to get all the help we want,—of the right kind. The house is all ready to be occupied."

"Indeed, sir, I could come right away. Though we have paid our rent here in advance, that will not be much of an object."

Mr. Conover stated the terms he had thought of offering. To Mr. Morrison they appeared generous.

"You can come over to-morrow and see how you like it. I shall be there nearly all day."

"I don't know how to thank you, but I shall do my best to deserve your favor."

"We owe much of our good fortune to Miss Kathie, I 'm sure," said grandmother, in a tremulous voice. "The Lord bless you, child, for caring

for the poor and needy. I'm sure I rejoice in your prosperity."

"It's so nice to be able to do these things!" Kathie exclaimed, clasping Uncle Robert's hand as they walked slowly homeward. "Mamma once said the fairies did n't all live in palaces."

"No, for I found one in a very humble cottage; but I shall transport her to the best at my command."

Kathie laughed gayly.

A few days after Mr. Morrison removed his family to the pretty little house awaiting them. Mrs. Morrison had to come and express her thanks in person.

"It was a perfect godsend to us. Poor Hugh was getting so discouraged. O Mrs. Alston, it is n't every one who in prosperity remembers the poor. You ought to be proud indeed of Miss Kathie."

"I am thankful to God for her, which is better," Mrs. Alston returned, with a sweet smile.

The carpets came down, and were soon fitted to their respective places. Kathie thought them lovelier than ever. Then quantities of furniture, until she almost wondered if they would ever find a place for it all.

Latterly she had not gone to school, as it was so near vacation, and Uncle Robert was very fond of having her for a companion. She was delighted now in watching the completion of their plans.

Aunt Ruth's room looked lovely. Kathie kept admiring every new article that was brought into it, and when the pictures came to be hung she declared it perfect.

"Have n't you any curiosity to see yours?" Uncle Robert asked.

"Is it done yet?"

"Finished yesterday afternoon. Shall I conduct you to your realm of enchantment?"

"Oh!" and Kathie sprang up eagerly.

Two steps at a time they went, laughing gayly. Uncle Robert took the key out of his pocket.

"Open sesame!"

It was like a fairy palace! The daintiest flowered carpet, and a set of elegant enamelled furniture done in a tint of exquisite pearl, with lovely ornamentation. The bureau was broad and low, the mirror showing her more than half of herself, the shining golden curls and happy, beaming face. There was the white bed opposite, a little table with its vase of flowers, a

low rocking-chair, and a pretty red and white willow workstand. And there, best of all, over the low mantel hung a picture of Uncle Robert. Kathie clasped her arms around his neck.

"O Uncle Robert!" and her voice trembled with emotion. "You are the best and dearest uncle in the world. And I'm so glad to have you!"

He kissed the rosy face many times. She was very dear indeed to him.

"It is so very beautiful," she exclaimed, when she could command her voice. "And I am very glad about the picture. I shall always think whose generous hand bestowed all these blessings. If I could only do something in return."

"You can repay me for everything, Kathie, my darling. To see you growing into a noble and pure-hearted woman, intent upon making the world a little better for her presence, will make me feel that I have not placed all these blessings in your way vainly. The reward is not simply in being grateful to me, but in sharing your happiness with others, in proving a good daughter and sister, and a kind friend."

"I am sometimes afraid that I never can be good

enough, Uncle Robert," Kathie answered, seriously.

"I can trust you while you keep so near to humility," he said, in an encouraging tone.

"I feel like the Pilgrims when they reached the Palace Beautiful," she returned, with a sweet smile.

"And the giants, — are they all dead?"

"I don't know. I 'm so happy that nothing seems to trouble me. I wonder if it is quite right."

"Yes," he said, gayly. "God means that we shall have some hours of satisfaction and content, especially in childhood. I want you to enjoy life now. With years always come added cares."

Her two gifts from Mr. Meredith had been nicely hung. Indeed, it seemed as if nothing was wanting.

"In a few days we shall be ready for our removal," Uncle Robert said. "To-morrow mamma is to come over and unpack the dishes and settle the little odds and ends. As soon as the smell of paint is aired out Aunt Ruth can take up her abode. There will be a great deal to do afterward with the grounds and fences, but it will be pleasant to watch the improvements from our windows."

So they locked up the enchanted palace and walked

slowly down the broad, shady avenue. Grandmother Morrison stood out by the door of her little cottage. Hugh had improved it a great deal already. The straggling shrubbery had been trimmed, the grass cut short, and the falling vines trained over the lattice.

"Come in and see how we look, Miss Kathie," grandmother said, with an old-fashioned courtesy.

Kathie thought her cap and apron were even whiter than snow.

They walked into the cheerful room. Mrs. Morrison sprang up and placed some chairs for them. Jamie was dragging a wooden horse on wheels, and his little sister, who sat on the floor, clapped her hands and crowed, and occasionally delivered a speech in baby dialect.

"Are you feeling at home?" Uncle Robert asked.

"O yes, wonderfully so," returned Mrs. Morrison. "I tell Hugh that we can never be grateful enough for our good fortune. I don't know what we should have done, and I hope that he will please you; I know he will try to do his best."

"Kathie and I are not very unreasonable people," he answered, smilingly.

Mrs. Morrison insisted that they should have a saucer of berries and cream, and then grandmother wanted her to go through the house. It looked so cosey and pretty, with a quaint, old-fashioned air, for much of the furniture had been the old lady's when she first went to housekeeping. In the tall China vases, standing on the parlor mantel, there were some fragrant roses that perfumed the room, and great long sprays of honeysuckle.

"I hope you'll be just as happy in your own house," she said, laying her hand on Kathie's shoulder. "If you begin by remembering the poor and distressed, God will not be likely to turn his face from you; and I wish you a long, happy life."

"Thank you," Kathie said, in a low tone, yet her smooth brow was rather thoughtful. It did not seem hardly right for her to have so much credit when Uncle Robert was the true agent, the generous prince.

Mrs. Alston and Kathie were over to the new house all of the following day, placing furniture and dishes in order. The boys were to come after school, and there was no lagging behind, you may be sure. Uncle Robert had kept the doors locked most of the

time, though Rob and Freddy thought it rather unjust that Kathie should be indulged in such an unlimited manner, while they "could n't have anything, or go anywhere!"

Now they were wild with delight, and ran in and out of every room, each "Oh!" growing larger and louder. After they had explored the lower rooms, they made a grand rush for their own. They were to reign undisputed over the third story, as the servants' rooms were in the part built as an extension.

There was a large apartment, with a bed for each, if they chose, and a roomy closet also, to save cause for dispute; beyond, two smaller play-rooms. Rob's had shelves for books, brackets for numerous uses, such as boys only can discover; and in one corner a neat little work-bench with a box of tools.

"Now, Freddy," said Uncle Robert, "you must never touch an article in here unless Rob gives you permission. You must learn to remember this, though I expect it will come quite hard at first."

"And Rob must not take anything of mine," returned the little fellow, with much importance.

"No, not without leave. I want you to be kind

and obliging to one another, and to pay just as much respect to each other's belongings as you would to mine ; and, Rob, you must keep all dangerous tools locked up for fear of an accident."

Here was Freddy's domain. There was but one thing in it now, — a huge rocking-horse. Fred made an immediate plunge.

"He's a beauty, now, I tell you ! and real stirrups !" Fred opened his mouth and drew in a long breath of amazement.

"Now this is your play-room, Freddy, and you must keep all your traps up here. I believe I shall confiscate all the articles I find going astray, — have a sort of a pound."

Rob laughed heartily. "I don't believe you'll get many of mine," he said. "I've never had a real good place for odds and ends, but now you shall see how I'll keep them in order."

Uncle Robert gave a mirthful smile out of the corners of his eyes.

"He's Firefly," announced Freddy, patting his horse's real mane. "And you must n't 'pound him, Uncle Robert."

"Then you must not let him run away, and go

galloping over the house"; and Uncle Robert made a threatening gesture.

"It's all royal," declared Rob. "I don't see how you could think of so many things that boys need. And here's the sky-parlor! Hurrah!" and Rob made a rush up the steps to the observatory.

"Won't we have fun!" shouted Freddy, trudging after him, red in the face and out of breath with his efforts to mount Firefly.

"Children," said their mother, "Uncle Robert will think he's in Bedlam."

"We must have some place to make a noise," returned Rob, who felt very much like breaking out into an Indian dance with full accompaniment of war-whoops. "And when a fellow gets brimful —"

"We shall have to be indulgent," said Uncle Robert, good-naturedly.

"It's just magnificent! If you'd had Aladdin's lamp you could n't have done any better, Uncle Robert! And now when are we coming to live here?"

"To-morrow, I think."

Rob threw up his cap. Freddy followed suit, but his hat being straw, a whiff of wind took it, and away it floated over the observatory railing.

"Bad for your enthusiasm," said Uncle Robert, laughingly; "but I guess we shall find it on the roof as we go down."

"I'll take a little ride on Firefly," was Freddy's philosophical announcement; and he mounted his steed while the rest returned to the lower floor, Rob enjoying the fun of climbing out of the window for the missing hat.

Presently they all went back. "What a forlorn little place!" ejaculated Rob, cutting off the top of a hollyhock with a little switch he had picked up elsewhere. "To think that we have lived in it so many years!" and he gave a disdainful glance around.

"But it's been real nice," said Kathie. "I shall always remember two such delightful events."

"What?" asked Rob. He could think of nothing but bringing coal and water, splitting kindlings, and working in the garden when he wanted to go fishing.

"Miss Jessie's staying to tea, and dear Uncle Robert's coming home. And then the first day she took Aunt Ruth sleigh-riding, and O, ever so many pleasant things!"

"But the new house for me, say I!"

Kathie looked thoughtful. She did anticipate a

great deal of happiness in the future, but somehow the memories of the last six months were very dear and sweet to her. It seemed to her that she was n't quite the same little Kathie who had found a few gifts on the kitchen mantel in the early dawn of Christmas morning. She used to think it very hard to have to stay in and sew when other girls ran out to play, to wear shabby boots, and dresses that were faded and mended, and never have any money to spend. Did she really deserve all these blessings?"

She prayed softly that God would not let her go astray, and that she might be a comfort to them all.

The next morning there was some packing, though Mrs. Alston had decided to keep only a few things that were endeared to her by old and pleasant associations. The remainder were to be sold at auction, and the house also was to pass into new hands.

They took Aunt Ruth in a carriage, and then Uncle Robert insisted upon carrying her up and down stairs in order to have her see every room. Her joy and gratitude were very touching. Even in the old prosperous days they had not been quite so elegant. Her own apartment suited her to a charm.

"I am so glad you chose crimson," she said. "It has such a warm, cosey look in winter."

"She 's like Fred," said Rob, laughing, — "making arrangements for winter. Why, it will be midsummer first!"

"True enough! Well, Rob, here 's the lovely lake looking cool and shady. The view from this bay-window is charming. Altogether I feel like Kathie, — as if I were in fairy-land."

"And now I have one of my wishes," said the child, with a bright smile. "If I can only have the next; but I shall not know what to ask for the third."

"It is one of the fortunate dispensations of Providence that our wishes shall always increase," said Uncle Robert, with a mirthful expression.

"Kathie is n't a fair sample," continued Rob. "She does n't empty her purse, nor do any of the things that I would like."

"When I make my next fortune, Rob, I shall surely have to take you into partnership," said his uncle.

It seemed so odd to have supper in that long dining-room, where the sideboard was ornamented with choice glasses and lovely bouquets, and the

bright pictures hanging on the walls made it look like giving a party, Fred said.

"I think we ought to have a house-warming; is n't that what people call it?" Rob exclaimed.

"And I too," declared his uncle. "We must christen our own abode. Kathie, we will send for Mr. Meredith and have a gay time."

"O Uncle Robert, you always do plan such delightful things!" and Kathie's face was in a glow of pleasure.

"We will write to-morrow, and ask him to spend a week or two with us, and while he is here we will give the party."

"Whom shall we ask?" said Rob, alive with interest. "I'd like to have some boys."

"How odd! Now Kathie and I would be better pleased with girls."

"A girls' party! Why, it would n't be any fun at all!" and Rob was going into the scarlet hues of indignation when a merry twinkle in his uncle's eye caused him to pause and feel rather abashed.

"Yes, have some girls," said Freddy. "Can't Miss Jessie come, and, O Uncle Robert, if you would only buy me a parrot!"

At this there was a general laugh.

"Well, we will have boys and girls and grown people. I don't know as parrots would be considered an addition"; and Uncle Robert looked very grave.

Freddy did n't exactly see the point, but just then the dessert was brought in, and both party and parrot were secondary considerations.

They took a turn out on the lawn afterward, and though Freddy begged very hard to sit up, they soon found him curled into a little ball in the corner, and mamma took him to bed. But Kathie had a nice long talk with Uncle Robert.

"I seem to be out visiting in some grand place," Kathie said, in her soft, sweet voice. "Dear mamma, can we ever be thankful enough? We must spend half our time trying to make Uncle Robert happy."

"And it's going on to midnight, my fairy queen," he said, kissing her, deeply touched with her tender, girlish thought. "If you are a princess of the true blood, you will feel the three grains of sand under your fourteen feather-beds."

Kathie laughed gayly at that. "Only I believe it was peas or pebble-stones," she corrected.

So Aunt Ruth was carried up, and Kathie had to take another survey of the rooms. Mrs. Alston thought it best for Aunt Ruth to share hers, as before. A door opened into Kathie's chamber, but it looked so lovely, she said, that she was almost afraid to try it.

She wondered if it was wicked to have her head so bewildered with a crowd of thoughts, but she did try to feel very thankful. How delightful it would be to ask some of the girls to stay all night with her, and she resolved always to love the poorer ones as well as those who were rich! Everybody had been so good and kind to her!

She did n't feel a bit sleepy, and after the lights were put out she lay with her eyes wide open, remembering just how everything looked. There was her bureau with its ground-glass scent-bottles, the washstand with its china basin and ewer with dainty ornamentations in gold and green, and her beautiful pictures, — Uncle Robert, whose merry eyes were the least bit drowsy in the dark, and — a long, dreamy pause.

CHAPTER XV.

A HOUSE-WARMING.

THERE was a great shout at the door, and Kathie rubbed her eyes, very certain that she had gone to bed only five minutes before.

“Come!” exclaimed Rob. “We’ve been all over the place and it’s splendid! And breakfast is ready!”

There was the sun, sure enough! And O, how lovely everything was on this summer morning! She dressed herself and went down stairs, and found her mother and Aunt Ruth looking as much at home as if they had lived in a palace all their lives. Kathie kissed them both, and then Uncle Robert, who held the dear little face close to his own many seconds.

“Why did n’t you call me sooner?” she asked. “I did not think it was so late; indeed, I did n’t know that I had been asleep until Rob woke me. Everything appeared so strange last night.”

"You are not homesick for the old place?" said her uncle.

"Homesick!" ejaculated Rob, disdainfully.

Hannah brought in the breakfast, and they soon settled themselves.

"I wish I did n't have to go to school," said Rob. "It's so near vacation."

"And then you will have six weeks," responded his mother. "It is hardly worth while to anticipate."

"But Kathie's having a good time."

"Rob, I have n't played as much as when I went to school," Kathie said.

"But you can do as you like! I just wish —"

"Rob," said his mother, "are you the first to express dissatisfaction?"

There was an odd little look in Kathie's eyes. Rob colored, and was serious for a moment.

"Giants even here," he said, with a laugh. "You will not hear another word out of me about that, if school should last a month."

"Good," said his uncle, approvingly. "Play has not half the charm when it becomes steady company."

"I've never been tired of it. But, Uncle Robert, what about the sail-boat?"

"O, not a sail-boat!" exclaimed Mrs. Alston, entreatingly, her face shadowed with apprehension.

"I have decided not to get the boat this summer, Rob. There is another thing that I think will please you equally as well."

"What?"

"Let me give you a surprise"; and Uncle Robert nodded comically.

So Rob gathered up his books and went off to school without another word, trying to imagine that he was quite a hero, and wondering with all his energy what the new gift would be. He wanted a gun and a horse, but mamma would object to the gun, of course, women always were so timid. Just wait until he was a man!

Kathie and her uncle wrote a note to Mr. Meredith after breakfast, then they took a tour around the grounds to inspect some newly begun improvements. The house fronted the east, with perhaps a hundred feet of ground between that and the street, and at the south it sloped down to the lake. The trees had been thinned out, leaving just enough

for shade. Kathie's summer-house was to be here, and at the edge they were to have a boat and bathing house, and a little dock built out, as the shore was very shallow.

"I never supposed it would look so pretty," Kathie said, glancing around. "And it's not a bit dreary or lonesome. You'll never go away again, Uncle Robert."

"No, if it please God," he said, with tender gravity.

They were some days in getting used to their new abode. Mrs. Alston desired to live as simply as possible, for she was a quiet, retiring woman, and had seen the folly of great display in many cases when she was younger. She wanted her children to be trained in good and useful habits, and she knew how easy it was to glide into extravagance. They must not tax Uncle Robert's kindness too largely.

The boys ran wild, and made dozens of new discoveries every day,—birds' nests, squirrels' holes, hollow trees, and all kinds of marvellous places. Charlie Darrell was delighted beyond measure, and came over every day.

The neighbors around were not tardy in calling

upon them. Some, of course, were sincere friends, but there were others who had scarcely noticed them when they were poor.

“A little money ought not to make so much difference,” said Kathie, thoughtfully, as she was walking up and down the lawn with Uncle Robert. “We were just as good before.”

“Yes,” Uncle Robert returned, with a slow, quaint smile. “My little girl, this is a difficult subject to understand in all its bearings. I think there are many noble people in the world who value another according to his or her worth, and yet it would not always be pleasant to invite them to one’s house. When you are older this matter will appear clearer to you. A really refined and well-bred person would hesitate to go anywhere and make a shabby appearance ; and poor people cannot always dress as they would like. I think Mrs. Grayson has admired your mamma very much ; but suppose she had invited her to a large party last winter ?”

“O, mamma would not have gone !”

“Your mamma’s good sense would not have allowed such a step ; but there are some poor people who would have run in debt for a fine dress, and have

spent a miserable evening in trying to appear of much more consequence than they really were. These usages of society are, in themselves, wise and proper, and it is only in the hands of selfish and underbred people that they are employed as a means of pain. You can see that Mr. and Mrs. Morrison would feel out of place in our social gatherings."

"I believe I understand that"; and Kathie smiled readily, though the puzzled look was not all out of her face.

"It is much wiser and kinder to render people happy in their own sphere than, from an ill-judged generosity, to take them out of it occasionally and then thrust them back."

"But if we have a party, ought n't I to ask the poor girls as well as those who are rich?"

"Will you ask every one in school?"

"No," returned Kathie, after a pause; "there are some rude, rough girls that I never play with."

"Your judgment will teach you whom to invite, I think; and, Kathie, the great thing with all true men and women is a noble, useful life. This can only proceed from a generous, well-regulated soul. Now when Mr. Meredith comes to look at our house we

shall not expect him to examine the foundation-stones, the timber, the thickness of the walls, and inspect the quality of our wall-paper, — shall we ? ”

“ Why, no ” ; and she laughed at the ridiculous idea.

“ He will judge it altogether, and if it has a pleasant, harmonious effect, he will enjoy it. Just so it is with character. We never expect to tell people how bad our tempers were, and what hard work we had to make them better, — that we were very vain, and had striven against it, and the many faults that continually beset poor human nature ? And yet it is these small, unseen things that improve us, — this constant, daily work. If the painters had neglected one side of our house, or put on some other color, it would be very quickly remarked.”

“ Indeed, it would ” ; and Kathie laughed.

“ So glaring faults are very easily observed ; and, on the other hand, pretty, engaging manners are as much admired. You sometimes like people without being able to explain why, — do you not ? ”

“ O yes ! — Miss Jessie for one.”

“ Miss Jessie is pleasant, refined, and possesses true appreciation. She never carries about with her an

obtrusive sense of education or dress. I am glad that you have chanced upon such a friend, although you are a little girl; and she is one of the persons who look for something beside wealth and show. Am I preaching you too much of a sermon?"

"O no, I like to hear you talk," Kathie said, simply.

"I will only add that if you had been a noisy, ill-mannered child, I should not have enjoyed taking you to New York, and I doubt if even the fortune would have gained you many admirers."

Kathie felt that this was true. It had not been simply because she was rich that Mrs. Havens and Mr. Meredith had taken such pains to entertain her. A child with less humility than Kathie might have felt secretly elated; but as she gave Uncle Robert's hand a fond squeeze she hoped inwardly that she would always be able to please and satisfy the friends who had been so kind.

A few days after this Mr. Meredith made his appearance at Brookside. He was delighted with the house and its surroundings, and most glad to see Kathie. But, joy of all, he had brought with him two elegant ponies that Uncle Robert had ordered,—

sleek and shining creatures with beautiful manes and great gentle-looking eyes. One had a white star in his forehead.

"For the present," Uncle Robert said, "one pony is to be Kathie's and the other Rob's. Kathie will be generous with hers, I know, and I want Rob to be manly and obliging. The first one who acts selfishly forfeits the pony."

"Can I choose?" asked Rob, with his eyes full of anxiety, and a little tremor in his voice.

"You are the eldest," said Kathie.

"Well, Rob, which is it then?"

Rob hesitated somewhat. He thought he ought to be generous, but it was very hard to give up his favorite, and perhaps Kathie did n't really care. So he flushed and looked boyishly embarrassed.

"I think this one is the prettiest," he said. "I like this white mark, and if I had him I should call him Star."

"Then you shall have him," replied Kathie.

"You don't want him?" asked Rob, slowly.

"It will not make any difference to me, and the other looks the most gentle. What shall we call him, Mr. Meredith?"

"I believe this one is named Hero."

"O, I like that, so I shall not change it."

Rob could hardly forbear giving his horse a rapturous hug. Just one more week of school, and then — hurrah !

"Why, Rob !" exclaimed his uncle, surprised at the pirouette.

"I was thinking of something" ; and Rob ran away quite red in the face.

On the next morning there came a pretty low pony-carriage and two saddles.

"It will be so delightful to take Aunt Ruth out," Kathie exclaimed, joyously. "Can I learn to drive ?"

"I am at your service for the first lesson," said Mr. Meredith. "Will you ride or drive ?"

"She will need a dress for riding," announced mamma, "and it will take a few days to get that ready."

Freddy shed some tears over the fact that his was n't a real live pony.

"You are rather small to manage one," said Uncle Robert, soothingly, "but one of these days you 'll grow as large as Rob."

That was quite comforting.

Kathie was a little timid, it must be confessed. The horses were very gentle creatures and well trained, and Mr. Meredith was the most patient of instructors.

On the way they passed Lottie Thorne, who had gone of an errand, and so was not in school.

"I suppose Kathie Alston feels very grand," she said, in an envious tone, as she was telling the incident. "A handsome young gentleman too, that I never saw before. Girls, she will outshine us all!"

"O, it's her pony," exclaimed Mary Cox. "Rob told us all about it; they each have one."

"It's so charming to put on airs when people have been poor as — as —" But Lottie hardly dared make the comparison in her mind.

"Kathie never did put on airs, and will not now," Mary declared, brave little champion that she was. "I'm sure that I'd rather Kathie Alston would have a fortune than any other girl in the world."

Poor Lottie was forced to keep silence, but she made herself very miserable over the ponies. Her father kept two horses, but he would as soon think of

sending her up in a balloon as allowing her to try to drive.

Rob had his indulgence in the afternoon. He had ridden more than one old nag bareback, and so he quite plumed himself upon his skill.

They began to plan about their party, and had great fun in choosing a name for the new house. Rob's taste ran to the extravagant. Finally the contest was narrowed to two, — Silver Lake Cottage and Cedarwood. At the north stood a beautiful grove of cedars, which made the latter very appropriate.

Kathie proposed that they should go and call upon Miss Jessie and ask her opinion. Mr. Meredith was quite charmed with the young lady, and the sweet old grandmother also.

Miss Jessie declared in favor of Cedarwood. She and Mr. Meredith had a gay chat and a walk through the garden, greatly to Kathie's delight, for she was an ardent admirer of both.

After that they were much taken up with preparations for the party. Rob's vacation came at last, and he could hardly contain himself. Mrs. Alston felt sometimes as if he was getting quite beyond her jurisdiction, and he had always been rather boisterous and headstrong.

"We will take him in hand presently," said his uncle. "Through the winter I shall have more time to devote to him, and then part of the excitement will have subsided. He has the foundation for a fine man in him, I think."

"But I sometimes feel like Kathie, that we give you a great deal of trouble and can do but little for you," she said with a sad, sweet smile.

"And I am glad to take the trouble. The old selfish, ease-loving years of my life have passed forever. In God's good providence I have become useful at last."

The lawn and shrubbery were to be decorated with colored lanterns, although there would be a moon. A band of music was engaged, and there was to be a bountiful supper with an abundance of ices. They had a great time making out lists of invitations. Kathie's generous heart would have taken in nearly all Brookside.

She thought, when the evening arrived, that she had never dreamed of anything so beautiful. But when she came down stairs dressed in simplest white Rob felt immensely disappointed.

"I'd have put on the very handsomest thing I

had," he said, decisively. "I'd show Lottie Thorne and some of the rest what I could do."

"No, Kathie is just right," said Mr. Meredith. "There is nothing in the world as attractive as a sweet face and a simple, unselfish heart."

It was a splendid night, and the guests soon began to arrive. Troops of girls and boys, and not a few older people, for there was a very general feeling in Brookside that the Alstons fully deserved their good fortune. Mr. Meredith and Uncle Robert proved most charming hosts.

The girls had to go up and see Kathie's room. Did she really have a pony of her own, and just as much money as she could spend? and was she going to boarding-school, or would she have a governess at home, and a piano, and —"

Kathie laughed merrily. "I don't know what I am going to do," she said, "and I have a Fortunatus's purse with just one piece of gold in it, but when I spend that another always comes. It's real fun."

What a gay, delightful evening they had! Running hither and thither, looking at everything and finding no end of wonders. There were plays without number, and some dancing on the lawn, and the

music sounded most bewitching as it floated through the trees. Everybody declared that there never had been such a time before. I think Rob was excusable if he did show off a little to some of the girls who had amused themselves by teasing Kathie.

Mr. Meredith and Miss Jessie watched the little girl as she flitted from one to another, paying the most attention to those who were poorly dressed or felt embarrassed by the crowd. She brought Lucy and Annie Gardiner to her uncle, though they were a trifle shy at first, but they afterward pronounced him "just splendid."

Then they were summoned to supper. The table was most beautifully arranged, and though the refreshments were abundant, they were in no wise extravagant, — a point that Mrs. Alston had strongly insisted upon.

Toward the close of the feast Mr. Meredith announced to them that they had assembled for a more momentous purpose than mere amusement. This pretty abode was to be christened, but first he desired to tell them a story, an odd little history of a dainty fairy whom he had met, and what had happened to her. The first part was very well disguised, but as

he went on a general whisper floated through the room. "Kathie Alston! Kathie Alston!" and the voices grew more merry and distinct, while all eyes turned to Kathie's blushing face.

"And although it has been decided to call the place Cedarwood, — a name both pretty and appropriate, — there will be to some of us a dearer appellation, a kind of pet name that will bring a tender remembrance of these pleasant incidents, and this is 'Kathie's Fairy-land.' So let us wish its young mistress health, prosperity, and a long, happy life!"

"Hurrah!" exclaimed Harry Cox, in his good-natured, boisterous way.

There was a tremendous response to this. Kathie was glad to hide her blushing face behind Miss Jessie.

"I am afraid you will have Kathie quite spoiled," exclaimed Mrs. Alston, rather anxiously.

"Then we shall all have to go to work and reform her," returned Mr. Meredith, smiling. "But it seems to me that she has discovered some of the true purposes of life, and will not be easily led astray. There is a vein of gravity in her that one does not often find in happy, healthful children, a kind of ballast that will carry her safely over dangerous seas."

"I hope it may," was the fervent reply.

"Why, it *is* just like a book," declared Mary Cox, half devouring Kathie with kisses when she found her. "I should like to live here forever and ever."

The children crowded round and wished her all manner of good things. It hardly seemed possible that this could be little Kathie, who wore faded dresses at school and used to sit in the house and sew while other girls played.

There followed a general dispersion from the supper-room, and they were all surprised to find it so late. It was high time for the party to break up, so Mrs. Alston made no effort to detain the children, the feminine portion of which began to hunt up shawls, hats, and various dainty wraps, confessing their supreme enjoyment with every other breath. Yet it was a long while before the last good-bys were said. The children crowded around Kathie as if they were afraid she might be spirited away, and they all felt that she was the dearest and sweetest little girl in the world.

Kathie and Uncle Robert stood on the balcony watching Mr. Morrison put out the lamps. Great sheets of silvery moonlight quivered over the lawn, and the golden stars twinkled up above, tender-eyed, and with fond benedictions.

“O Uncle Robert, what a lovely time we have had!” she exclaimed. “It does n’t seem as if anything so wonderful could happen to me, of all others. And Mr. Meredith was right, — it *is* fairy-land and you are my darling prince!”

He stooped and kissed her fondly.

“And you are better than any fairy,” said Mr. Meredith, joining them, — “a little girl who found the charm of a true, generous life even in poverty. May God keep you as pure and simple-hearted in prosperity!”

There were tears in her eyes as she kissed her mother and Aunt Ruth, for her heart seemed overflowing with joy and gratitude. And she wondered if there had ever before been such a happy little girl in all the world.

And here we must leave her for a brief while. That her future will have in it many joys, you can scarcely doubt. That it will also have duties, cares, and perplexities is but natural, since no life can ever be wholly perfect in this world.

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